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University of Cape Town

Faculty of Humanities

**A Study of Factors that Enable the Development
of Sustainable FET College Entrepreneur
Development Partnerships**

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Educational Administration, Planning and Social Policy

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TYLVAN001

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: signature removed Date: 20102/09

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with developing understanding of the issue of partnership sustainability and the factors that enable this. The South African further education and training (FET) college sector forms the context for the research and the specific focus is on entrepreneur development partnerships that have a community development focus. Numerous factors were found to strongly influence the sustainability of these kinds of partnerships. Of these factors, institutional ‘will’ was found to drive the establishment and continuation of partnerships, and the strength of this was largely determined by the relevance of a partnership to the strategy of an organisation, and the degree to which it delivered outcomes and benefits that matched expectations and were considered mutual. ‘Will’ on its own was found to be insufficient though as institutions also need the ‘means’ to put partnerships into practice and keep them going. ‘Means’ is understood as constituting a vision and strategy for the partnership, resources in the form of people, to lead it and carry out its work, and funding to finance its activities. Furthermore, for a partnership to be effective and continue over time it needs to be evolutionary and to go through cycles of implementation, reflection, learning and renewal. Good leadership, management and communication play a central role in this process. Additionally, healthy relationships are at the heart of effective long-term partnerships and, as such, a focus is needed on developing and maintaining the ‘relationship’ element of partnerships if these are to continue over time. Finally, the sustainability of partnerships is facilitated by formalised agreements, and their continuation beyond the individuals that established them is ensured through institutionalisation.

Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| ABET | Adult Basic Education Training |
| CEO | Company Executive Officer |
| DCEO | Deputy Company Executive Officer |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| DoL | Department of Labour |
| FET | Further Education and Training |
| FTE | Full Time Equivalent |
| LED | Local Economic Development |
| NATED | National Education |
| NC(V) | National Certificate (Vocational) |
| NGO | Non Government Organisation |
| PDE | Provincial Department of Education |
| PMFA | Public Finance Management |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications Authority |
| SETA | Sector Education Training Authority |
| SMME | Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises |
| T-EP | Technical-Enterprise Programme |

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Declaration</i> | ii |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | iii |
| <i>Abstract</i> | iv |
| <i>Acronyms</i> | v |
| <i>Contents</i> | vi |
| <i>Tables and Figures</i> | ix |
| <i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i> | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Purpose and approach | 1 |
| 1.3 Rationale for the study | 3 |
| 1.4 Thesis structure | 4 |
| <i>Chapter 2: Context and Background</i> | 6 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 6 |
| 2.2 The national FET context for partnership development..... | 6 |
| 2.3 Developing entrepreneurs in an FET college context | 10 |
| 2.4 The Technical-Enterprise Programme Partnership | 12 |
| The partners | 12 |
| The T-EP Partnership | 16 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 20 |
| <i>Chapter 3: Literature Review</i> | 21 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 21 |
| 3.2 Conceptualising partnership..... | 22 |
| What is partnership? | 22 |
| Why Partnership? | 23 |
| Social partnerships..... | 24 |
| A critical perspective on partnership – some issues | 25 |
| 3.3 Partnerships in South African FET colleges | 26 |
| 3.4 Understanding sustainability | 27 |
| Understanding and measuring sustainability | 27 |
| Institutional and project sustainability | 29 |
| Sustaining development projects | 29 |
| Why a concern with partnership sustainability? | 30 |
| 3.5 A framework for understanding partnerships and their sustainability | 31 |
| 3.6 Key factors that enable the development of sustainable partnerships..... | 33 |
| Factor 1: An institutional environment that is conducive to the development of sustainable partnerships..... | 34 |
| Factor 2: A mutual will to engage in the partnership due to continuing relevance and satisfactory level of outcomes and benefits | 36 |
| Factor 3: A shared vision and strategy for the partnership that aligns with each partner's | |

| | |
|--|----|
| goals and strategy | 37 |
| Factor 4: Sufficient alignment between partner institutions | 38 |
| Factor 5: Resources that enable partnership development and continuation | 39 |
| Factor 6: Formalisation of the partnership agreement | 40 |
| Factor 7: A healthy partnership 'relationship' | 41 |
| Factor 8: Strong enabling leadership and effective management and communication | 42 |
| Factor 9: Community support gained and retained | 44 |
| Factor 10: Partnership learning, adaptability and evolution | 44 |
| Factor 11: Institutionalisation | 45 |
| 3.7 Conclusion | 46 |
| <i>Chapter 4: Research Methodology</i> | 48 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 48 |
| 4.2 Research strategy | 48 |
| Overview | 48 |
| Case study..... | 49 |
| Generalisation of case study findings | 50 |
| Selection of the T-EP Partnership case..... | 51 |
| Flexible design..... | 52 |
| 4.3 Data collection, analysis and presentation | 52 |
| Framework for data collection and analysis | 52 |
| Data collection methods | 53 |
| Data analysis and interpretation..... | 56 |
| Presenting the findings | 57 |
| 4.4 Ensuring quality and credibility | 57 |
| 4.5 Ethical considerations | 58 |
| 4.6 Limitations of the research..... | 59 |
| 4.7 Conclusion | 59 |
| <i>Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings</i> | 60 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 60 |
| 5.2 Discussion of findings..... | 60 |
| Factor 1. An institutional environment that is conducive to the development of sustainable partnerships..... | 60 |
| Factor 2. A mutual will to engage in the partnership due to continuing relevance and a satisfactory level of outcomes and benefits | 63 |
| Factor 3. A shared vision and strategy for the partnership that aligns with each partner's goals and strategy | 67 |
| Factor 4. Sufficient alignment between partner institutions | 69 |
| Factor 5. Resources that enable partnership continuation..... | 71 |
| Factor 6. Formalisation of the partnership agreement | 72 |
| Factor 7. A healthy partnership 'relationship' | 73 |
| Factor 8. Strong supportive leadership and effective management and communication | 75 |
| Factor 9. Community support gained and retained | 79 |
| Factor 10. Partnership learning, adaptability and evolution | 80 |
| Factor 11. Institutionalisation | 81 |
| 5.3 Conclusion | 82 |
| <i>Chapter 6: Conclusion</i> | 84 |
| 6.1 Introduction..... | 84 |
| 6.2 Characteristics of an 'ideal-type' sustainable partnership..... | 84 |
| 6.3 Factors that enable sustainable partnerships | 85 |

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 6.4 | Key lessons on establishing and maintaining sustainable partnerships | 87 |
| | Establishing and developing sustainable partnerships | 87 |
| | Maintenance and continuation | 90 |
| 6.5 | Key partnership sustainability challenges faced by FET colleges | 91 |
| 6.6 | Assessing partnership sustainability | 92 |
| 6.7 | Conclusion | 93 |
| | <i>Bibliography</i> | 94 |
| | <i>Appendix</i> | 104 |
| | Appendix 1: The Research Process..... | 104 |
| | Appendix 2: The Interview Guide..... | 107 |
| | Appendix 3: Data Analysis Process Followed..... | 110 |

University of Cape Town

Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1. Partnership factors: system-level, level of importance and influences47

Table 2. Themes of qualitative enquiry.....49

Table 3. Factors that enable partnership sustainability.....86

Figures

Figure 1. Structure of the Technical-Enterprise Programme Model.....19

Figure 2. The partnership system.....32

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with developing understanding of the issue of partnership sustainability and the factors that enable this. The further education and training (FET) college sector forms the context for the research and the specific focus is on entrepreneur development partnerships that have a community development focus. These kinds of partnerships fall into the categories of education, development or social partnerships (Seddon and Billet 2004: 5, and Hardman and Pienaar 2000: 12). The thesis builds an understanding of the sustainability of these kinds of partnerships through a review of pertinent literature and a case study of one FET college entrepreneur development partnership. This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and approach adopted in the thesis and discusses its rationale. It also outlines its structure.

1.2 Purpose and approach

This thesis has three broad aims:

- To develop an understanding of the issue of partnership sustainability in the context of FET colleges and entrepreneur development-type partnerships
- To identify and investigate key factors that affect the sustainability of FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships
- To identify lessons on how to build and maintain sustainable FET college partnerships that could be applied to entrepreneur development and other types of partnerships

The primary research question is:

- *What are the key factors that might enable the development of sustainable FET college entrepreneur development partnerships?*

The thesis also has two secondary questions which are answered through the investigation of the first:

- *What are the key characteristics of a sustainable partnership?*
- *What key lessons can be drawn from the literature and case study findings on how to build and maintain sustainable FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships?*

The foundational concepts of the thesis are ‘partnership’ and ‘sustainability’ which are defined in Chapter 3. ‘Partnership’ provides the foreground for the study and ‘sustainability’ the background.

The thesis is primarily exploratory in nature but also has a descriptive and explanatory purpose. Exploratory studies are used to investigate relatively new areas of research and usually use open, flexible and inductive approaches to gain insights into the phenomena (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 79-81).

The case study entrepreneur development partnership involved three core partners: an FET college, an enterprise development non-government organisation (NGO) and a city municipality. Confidentiality and anonymity were two ethical principles that guided this research study and to protect the identity of the organisations and individuals involved in the partnership, none have been named. The name of the partnership has been also been changed. Job titles are used for research participants and for the purposes of this study the partnership is called the Technical-Enterprise Programme (T-EP) Partnership.

The field research took place between December 2004 and the end of 2005. The development of the T-EP Partnership is traced and analysed from its earliest days in 1998 until the end of 2005.

The ultimate purpose of the thesis is to provide some insight into the issue of partnership sustainability in the context of FET colleges and lessons on how partnerships that are sustainable are developed and maintained. As such while it focuses on a single entrepreneur development partnership, the findings can be interpreted at a more general

level and have applicability to other types of college partnerships. The issue of generalisation of the findings is discussed in Chapter 4.

1.3 Rationale for the study

FET occupies a central place in the South African government's economic and social development strategy and partnerships are seen to be a key mechanism for achieving this (Jaff et al. 2004: 18-19). The ability to build and sustain linkages and partnerships with a range of groups and organisations is thus an important competency for FET colleges. Research (see Jaff et al. 2004: 73-91) indicates though that while there is some partnership development experience in the FET college sector, in general there is an inconsistent and undeveloped understanding of the concept and partnership expertise and capacity is limited. Furthermore many college linkages and relationships are ad hoc, short-term and not sufficiently rooted in college strategy. It is questionable how many of these could be considered to be 'genuine' partnerships or to be sustainable. Strategic partnerships that are sustainable are however considered more likely to achieve the benefits anticipated from partnerships in the sector.

An examination of the issue of FET college partnership sustainability thus seemed relevant.

Entrepreneur development was selected as the partnership focus for this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was seen to be highly relevant to FET colleges as developing entrepreneurs is not only a new mandate for them (see Chapter 2), it is a difficult one. Enabling students to successfully develop businesses presents entirely different challenges and needs compared with preparing students for formal employment – the traditional focus of FET colleges. Research and experience also indicated that colleges would be more likely to succeed in developing entrepreneurs if they collaborated with enterprise development organisations who could provide expertise in this area and government who could provide resources and other forms of support (see Gamble 2003: 36-40 and McGrath 2003a: 15-16).

The second reason for focusing on entrepreneur development partnerships was that most of the research that has addressed the topic of partnerships in FET colleges has tended to have an industry orientation. As such, this seemed to be a neglected area of research and one that could throw light on the unique challenges associated with college partnerships in this area.

It is hoped that findings of this thesis will contribute to the knowledge and thinking about partnerships in the FET sector and the development and sustainability of these.

1.4 Thesis structure

The chapters that follow are:

Chapter 2, '*Context and Background*', which provides an overview of the national FET context that has shaped the development of partnerships in the sector in the last decade. As entrepreneur development provides the focus of the partnership under study, this issue is also briefly considered in relation to FET colleges. Background information is then provided on the College, NGO and Municipality involved in the partnership. The chapter ends with an overview of the partnership.

Chapter 3, '*The Literature Review*' provides the theoretical and empirical framework for the thesis. The chapter develops an understanding of 'partnership' and then looks at partnerships in the FET college sector. It also discusses the issue of sustainability and why this is a concern for partnerships. Key factors which could influence the sustainability of entrepreneur development-type partnerships in an FET college setting are then examined.

Chapter 4, '*Research Methodology*' outlines the research approach employed and describes the methods used for data collection and analysis. The strategy used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study is also discussed. Furthermore, ethical considerations are addressed as are the limitations of the thesis.

Chapter 5, '*Discussion of Findings*' presents and discusses the findings from the partnership studied. The factors found to influence partnership sustainability in the literature review provide the framework for the presentation of these.

Chapter 6, '*Conclusion*' draws together the key findings from the literature and case study on partnership sustainability and factors that appear to have a significant influence on the sustainability of FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships. It also considers the issue of how to measure partnership sustainability and suggests a framework for doing this. Finally some key lessons on developing and maintaining sustainable partnerships are presented.

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Chapter 2: Context and Background

2.1 Introduction

The thesis is concerned with developing an understanding of the factors that could enable the sustainability of FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships. It does this through a case study of the Technical-Enterprise Programme (T-EP) Partnership¹. This chapter provides an overview of the national FET context which has shaped the development of partnerships in the sector in the last decade. As entrepreneur development provides the frame for the T-EP Partnership, this issue is also briefly considered in relation to FET colleges. The partnership and its partners are then described.

2.2 The national FET context for partnership development

The South African FET college sector has undergone significant change and development in the last decade in line with Department of Education (DoE) and Department of Labour (DoL) policy and legislation² (see Akoojee 2008: 13-14 and Jaff et al. 2004: 17-19). The pressing need for social and economic development in South Africa has driven this transformation. Government policy links skills development with economic growth and aims to bring about an education and training system that is more able to meet the needs of the economy and address the problem of unemployment (DoE 1998b: 8). The importance of the role of FET colleges in skills development, facilitating employment and reducing youth unemployment has been repeatedly stressed by government (see Akoojee 2008: 10).

As the formal economy is unable to absorb all who need work, self-employment will be the only route out of unemployment for many. Given this reality, FET colleges have been given a dual mandate – to prepare students both for employment in the formal economy

¹ As noted in Chapter 1, a pseudonym has been used for the partnership studied to protect the identity of its partners as well as the individuals who participated in it and the research.

² Policy and legislation that has guided the transformation of the FET sector includes: Education White Paper 4: A Programme for the Transformation of Further Education and Training, Preparing for the Twenty-first Century through Training and Work (August 1998); Further Education and Training Act (Act 98 of 1998); Green Paper: Skills Development Strategy for Economic Employment Growth in South Africa (March 1997); Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998); Skills Development Levies Act (Act 9 of 1999); and FET Colleges Act (Act 16 of 2006), which repealed the 1998 FET Act.

and for self-employment. As colleges previously only trained for formal employment, entrepreneur development is a new role (McGrath 2003a: 15).

It is in the context of the development of an FET college system which is responsive to skills development needs and employment that partnerships become important. In line with international trends, partnerships are promoted in government policy as key strategy for ensuring that education and training matches employer and community needs and bridges the gap between education and work (Jaff et al. 2004: 18, 19 and 73). Ultimately, partnerships are viewed as a way for colleges to increase their reach, effectiveness and sustainability through harnessing external networks, expertise, resources and infrastructure. Building and sustaining links and partnerships with different groups and organisations across sectors has thus become an important part of the new mandate of FET colleges.

The restructuring of the FET college sector began in 2001 and resulted in the merger of 152 technical colleges into 50 FET colleges. Jaff et al. (2004:19-20) note that while the process of merger planning occurred rapidly, subsequent institutional restructuring, strategic planning and management appointment processes were drawn out. The company executive officers (CEOs) at many colleges were only appointed during 2003 and 2004 and by the end of 2005 some deputy CEOs (DCEOs) and most college middle managers had yet to be appointed (Jaff et al. 2004: 19 and Gamble 2005a: 70).

Colleges were thus in the difficult position of having to transform and develop new structures and systems without key posts being filled. The poor alignment between the old system in place and the new system being introduced with regard to staffing, facilities, programmes, funding, and the regulations governing colleges also caused difficulties (Jaff et al. 2004: 19, 20, 43 and 71, Gamble 2005a: 69-72, and Gamble 2005b: 92-97). The problems experienced by colleges in the post-merger period compromised their restructuring processes, functioning and ability to achieve the level of responsiveness expected by policy.

Without the appointment of management, staff structures could not be finalised. Chronic understaffing occurred and many staff members had to take on extra responsibilities or these kept changing as colleges battled to cope simultaneously with restructuring demands and the establishment of a new FET system. Senior campus staff were often transferred to

central offices to take on acting management positions and replaced at campuses by other staff in an acting capacity³.

A further problem was the discrepancy between the FET vision of open demand-led provision supported by flexible hours and multiple modes of delivery, and colleges following term times and keeping school hours (Jaff et al. 2004: 20). Curriculum change in colleges also did not coincide with the establishment of the new FET system. While some learnerships and skills programmes were introduced in the post-merger phase, the main programme offerings available remained technical college NATED⁴ programmes which were not considered educationally sound or responsive to economic needs (Akoojee et al. 2007: 263 and 272, and DoE: 2007: 5).

One of the most significant difficulties that colleges faced with their restructuring and transformation was insufficient funding which hampered their operations and ability to achieve their new mandate (Du Toit and Taylor 2008: 47, Gamble 2004: 90-91, and Jaff et al. 2004: 6 and 71-72)⁵. This issue is particularly pertinent to this thesis as it affected colleges' ability to engage in and sustain partnerships and is addressed in later chapters. In many ways the funding model for FET colleges is at the heart of the problem.

The restructuring and functioning of FET colleges was funded on the basis of the pre-existing full-time equivalent (FTE) system which was used to calculate the number of staff allocated to a college and funds for non-personnel costs (Jaff et al. 2004: 9). This funding approach results in large classes which are unsuited to the kinds of programmes FET colleges are meant to provide and to the students from poor educational backgrounds they serve. This problem coupled with unfilled posts resulted in understaffing and colleges were thus forced to appoint additional staff who had to be paid from college income (Gamble 2004: 90). Problems in the college funding model also stem from the split in responsibility for colleges between the DoE and Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs). While the DoE establishes FET college policy, PDEs implement this in line with their education

³ According to Akoojee et al. (2007: 268) in 2003, 15 per cent of staff nationally were estimated to be working in acting positions.

⁴ National Education or NATED programmes were developed for use by technical colleges prior to the introduction of the FET system. The official curriculum document for these programmes is called NATED 191.

⁵ Fisher et al. (2003) draw attention to the lack of funding allocation by government to college restructuring and note that this process was largely enabled by private sector and donor funding.

budgets which they divide between schooling, FET colleges and other educational areas on the basis of the priority they give to each area. In practice, funding for FET colleges has not matched what they need to achieve the national policy agenda (Akoojee 2008: 15-16 and 24)⁶.

Government legislation makes provision for colleges to supplement the funding received from the DoE with income generated through fees-for-services and fundraising (DoE 1998 and 2006). The skills levy system, which was established by the DoL to fund skills development for employed and unemployed people, was viewed as an important source of income for colleges (Jaff et al. 2004: 5 and Mercorio and Mercorio 2000). Colleges can tap into skills levy funds through providing training for employers or Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) on a fees-for-services basis. Even with this source of funding, income generated by colleges through training services provided was reported in 2005 to represent no more than 5 percent of their total revenue (DoE 2005: 13)⁷.

College recapitalisation and the introduction of the National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) were major focuses of college transformation from 2006 following the government's allocation of R1.9 billion for this (DoE 2007: 5). The recapitalisation of college infrastructure occurred between 2006 and 2008 and the first (NC(V)) level was introduced in 2007 which started the phasing out of NATED programmes. The FET College Act of 2006 was also passed to address, among other things, the terms and conditions under which college staff are employed and to enable colleges to operate more flexibly (DoE 2007: 7)⁸.

Whilst there has been considerable change and investment in the FET sector since its establishment and it is now in a better position to achieve its mandate, Akoojee (2008: 3, 14-19) points out that a number of challenges remain. A major one concerns the disjuncture between policy and implementation that results from FET being a national

⁶ In 2001/02 and 2002/03 PDEs spent an average of 1.8 percent of their total education budgets on FET (Akoojee et al. 2007).

⁷ Akoojee et al. (2007: 268) point out that college delivery of learnerships and skills programmes (which fall within the DoL system) has been constrained by capacity and infrastructure limits within colleges as well as by articulation problems between Umalusi, SETAs and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

⁸ The FET Colleges Act (Act 16 of 2006) made all employees below the level of DCEO, college rather than PDE employees. This change gave colleges the power not only to appoint their own lecturing staff but to determine work hours that fell outside of the traditional school hours they had previously kept. The process of implementing the Act however began in 2007.

competence that is provincially managed. Another key challenge is establishing a more effective and sustainable funding model for colleges. While new norms and standards have been developed these have yet to be finalised (Potgieter 2008: 6 and Pandor 2008: 1).

2.3 Developing entrepreneurs in an FET college context

Given that developing entrepreneurs is a new mandate for FET colleges, most lack the expertise and capacity to effectively do this. Furthermore government policy support for college engagement in training for self-employment remains at the level of vision rather than at clear implementation guidelines or the allocation of resources (Akoojee et al. 2005: 114).

The literature points to two pathways to self-employment - *survivalist or subsistence* self-employment and *enterprise or development* self-employment (see Gamble 2003a: 30-32). Worldwide, most people in self-employment are survivalists and have typically moved directly into self-employment with limited general education.

The most successful entrepreneurs usually follow an enterprise or development self-employment pathway. Typically they complete their general education, undergo vocational or enterprise training and then work in formal employment before moving into self-employment. The period of wage employment enables them to develop business knowledge and skills and plays a crucial role in successful and sustainable enterprise self-employment. Akoojee et al. (2005: 149) note that the route to successful self-employment tends to be a long process that is not easy to accelerate.

The literature describes two broad approaches used by further and vocational education and training institutions in Africa and internationally to prepare students for self-employment (Gamble 2003a: 37 and McGrath 2003a: 16). The *minimalist approach* keeps enterprise training to a minimum and usually just includes entrepreneurship as a subject in the standard curriculum. The *maximalist approach*, on the other hand, focuses on enterprise development and vocational training content is an add-on. Practical enterprise experience is provided as is support and mentoring toward students establishing their own

businesses through, for instance, business incubators, and assistance with obtaining credit and accessing markets.

The literature raises various concerns about the ability of South African FET colleges to successfully launch their students into sustainable self-employment (see McGrath 2003a: 16 and Gamble 2003a: 2, 29 and 36). Firstly, successfully preparing students for self-employment is not only very challenging but, as noted above, it is not a traditional area of competence for colleges. Most colleges have had little engagement in this and if they have been involved, they have tended to adopt a minimalist approach. A few colleges, like the case study college, have gone beyond a straight minimalist approach and included additional support components like business incubators.

Secondly, while research indicates that the best path to successful and sustainable enterprise is through formal employment, the dearth of jobs means that many college graduates may not have the opportunity to first work in formal employment before embarking on self-employment. As such the only route to self-employment for many will be directly from training. While jumping the employment gap and moving directly into self-employment is a difficult option it is still considered viable especially if those involved have a good entrepreneurial aptitude and receive the right training and support (Gamble 2003a: 40, Nel and Gibb 2005: 73 and Cape Argus Network 2004: 1-2). Experience indicates that the transition from unemployment to maintaining a successful enterprise takes a minimum of five years if adequate support is provided. Success and sustainability depend on support being given in the start-up and growth phases of the new business.

Thirdly, successful and sustainable self-employment depends on more than aptitude, skills and experience. A range of factors including capital, infrastructure, and access to markets and networks strongly influence this (Akoojee et al. 2005: 149). If FET colleges are to support the development of entrepreneurs they thus need to be able to also provide assistance in this area.

Gamble (2003a: 68) believes that if colleges are to be responsive to the social and development needs of communities they need to cater for both survivalist and enterprise self-employment. A big concern though is how to finance entrepreneur development in resource-poor communities (McGrath 2003a: 16). This is an important issue for this thesis

given its concern with the sustainability of partnerships with entrepreneur development focus and is discussed further in Chapter 3 and 5.

It is in the context of the difficulties associated with genuine entrepreneur development and FET colleges' lack of expertise and capacity to facilitate this process that partnerships become important. Partnerships provide colleges with an opportunity to engage in entrepreneur development through collaboration with external organisations that have expertise in this area or can provide access to resources, infrastructure and business development and support networks.

2.4 The Technical-Enterprise Programme Partnership

The T-EP Partnership developed and operated over five years between 1998 and 2004. The discussion covers this period and reflects the situation as it was at the end of 2005 by which stage the partnership had ceased to function.

The partners

The T-EP had three core partners, an FET college, an enterprise development NGO and a city municipality. Over the years, various other organisations provided funding to cover operational and training costs as well as the development of Campus infrastructure, like business hives. As the research angle of this thesis is the FET college sector, more detail is provided on the college than the other two partners.

The FET College

The College is an urban college that merged in September 2002 and in 2005 had four campuses. It aimed to provide education and training that would lead to employment, small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) development, and higher education (College 2005: 2). 'Strategic partnerships' with business, government, NGOs and educational institutions were viewed as a key strategy for achieving its goals (College 2005: 28). One of the College's strategic priorities was to develop "a culture of entrepreneurship and business development" through teaching entrepreneurship in all courses and providing technical and enterprise training and support to SMMEs (College 2005: 33). To facilitate this, the College planned to establish an enterprise unit at each campus. By the end of

2005, only the Campus hosting the T-EP Partnership had such a unit but two more were planned by the end of 2008.

The College's merger took place after the start of the T-EP Partnership and in 2004 and 2005 when the research for this thesis took place, post-merger restructuring processes and system development were still underway and management staff appointments below the level CEO had yet to be made. The College experienced the same challenges as other colleges in this period (described in Section 2.2). Key challenges faced by the College included:

- Not being able to finalise its staff structure due to delays in senior management appointments
- The movement of senior campus staff to the central office to act in management positions and managing campuses with other staff in an acting capacity
- Understaffing and the consequent need for staff to take on additional roles and responsibilities
- Establishing new systems and procedures to meet legislative requirements and bringing College operations in line with these
- Managing restructuring, developments and operations with inadequate funding
- Historically keeping school hours and taking term breaks but needing to operate as a flexible FET college

The structure for the merged college included a CEO and three DCEOs. Functions like finances and human resources fell under the DCEO Corporate Services and the DCEO Education and Training was responsible for programme delivery and enterprise development. A number of portfolios fell under the DCEO Innovation and Development including student support, marketing, fundraising, new products and services, and partnerships. At the time of the research, DCEO positions were filled by previous campus heads in an acting capacity. The three sections of the College ran on a skeleton staff and one person often handled more than one portfolio.

The DCEO Innovation and Development previously headed up the Campus hosting the T-EP Partnership and led developments in relation to this. In her new role, she managed the Innovation and Development section of the College and in addition to her DCEO

responsibilities also handled the fundraising, new products and services, and partnership portfolios as these posts were not yet staffed. As partnership manager, she retained responsibility for the T-EP Partnership after her transfer to the central office.

At the time of the research, the College did not have a standard or coordinated approach to partnerships. Until and after the merger, partnerships were developed and managed by a range of campus and college-level staff. Personal contacts, partnership purpose, and job responsibility were factors that determined who became involved in a partnership. While lecturers were often involved in these, the responsibility for a partnership often rested with a head of department or campus head. Partnerships tended to be managed on an ad-hoc basis and few were formalised. Furthermore, staff engaging in these usually did so over-and-above their other full-time duties. After the merger, campuses continued to manage their partnerships to the best of their ability according to available time, finances and the requirements of each partnership.

The College planned to appoint a partnership manager who would establish partnership policies and procedures and oversee partnership development and management across the College. While partnerships would still be carried out by various staff in the College, the partnership manager would keep an overview of these to ensure that they developed as planned, followed the right procedures, dealt with problems, and achieved expected outcomes. Funding constraints had prevented the appointment of a partnership manager but plans were in place to fill the post toward the end of 2005.

The College, like other colleges, thus struggled to transform into an FET college while carrying out normal operations without key posts filled or adequate funding. The effect of the College's merger on the Campus hosting the partnership and the partnership is discussed in Chapter 5.

The Municipality

The Municipality partner is one of nine metropolitan or city municipalities in South Africa that was formed in 2000 through the municipal mergers. The T-EP Partnership was located in the Economic, Social Development and Tourism Directorate of the city. Before the merger it fell under the Department of Economic Development and Tourism of one of the municipalities that became part of the City Municipality. The director of this department

represented his municipality in the partnership before the merger and the City Municipality after it in his new role as Manager: Economic, Social Development and Tourism⁹.

Local government aims to promote social and economic development, and local economic development (LED) represents one of five key performance areas for municipalities (Economic Development Manager 2005: 15). A central LED strategy is to establish job-creating enterprises because the formal economy cannot provide jobs for all who need these (Nel and Gibb 2005: 45). While education is considered central to social and economic development it is a central government function and thus not part of the mandate of local government (Economic Development Manager 2005: 15). However, the City Municipality believes that to achieve its economic growth and job creation objectives it needs to play some role in skills development and it sees links and partnerships as a way to do this. A partnership strategy is consistent with international trends in LED (Nel and Gibb 2005: 69).

The Municipality's social and economic development goals thus formed the motivation for its engagement in the T-EP Partnership. This provided an opportunity for it to meet these goals through supporting enterprise development in an area of the city suffering from high unemployment and poverty which had been targeted by the Municipality for development.

The enterprise development NGO

The third partner in the T-EP Partnership is an enterprise development NGO, which at the time of the research had over twenty years experience in the area and was operating in three provinces. Using a partnership approach the organisation aimed to “develop a spirit of enterprise” through providing training and support for SMME development (College and NGO 2003c, Annexure O: 1). Job creation was an important goal of the organisation which it facilitated through developing micro-entrepreneurs with the capacity to employ others. Community development was a strong organisational focus. Partnerships with PDEs and FET colleges were viewed as a vehicle for enterprise development and job creation in communities suffering from poverty and unemployment.

⁹ The Manager: Economic, Social Development and Tourism is henceforth referred to as the ‘Economic Development Manager’.

The T-EP Partnership involved one of the provincial enterprise centres of the NGO. This Provincial Centre was established in 1998 on the basis of a four-year funding grant that focused on building the capacity of provincial colleges to provide entrepreneurship education through lecturer training. It was during this project that the College and the Provincial Centre of the enterprise development NGO formed a partnership and their partnership in relation to the T-EP grew out of this earlier relationship.

The T-EP Partnership

The T-EP Partnership began as a municipality-college partnership and grew to include the enterprise development NGO. This partnership provided the basis for other relationships between the College and the Municipality in new areas. A separate partnership between the Municipality and the NGO also developed from this. This thesis focuses on the T-EP Partnership, an understanding of which requires some understanding of the Campus at which it was located as well as the T-E Programme model. These provide the context for the partnership and the relationship that unfolded between the three partners.

The Campus hosting the partnership

The Campus began as a local government training centre which was built to address social and economic problems in the area through skills training. The area serviced had limited economic activities and was primarily a residential area catering to tourism and far from the city's core business and industry. Most residents supported themselves by travelling to work in the city or creating their own employment. Local communities suffered from a lack of housing, limited public services, and poor employment opportunities. Furthermore an unemployment rate of 65 percent was estimated in the area (Nel and Gibb 2005: 53).

When it opened in mid-1998 the training centre had no equipment and little funding for operating costs. Toward the end of 1998 the Municipality responsible for it approached the local college to provide training and manage it which began the relationship between the two. The three-way T-EP Partnership started when the NGO began providing business training at the centre in 1999.

In its early days, the broad vision for the centre was to “provide a second chance learning and work opportunity” through providing accredited technical and business training and supporting the development of entrepreneurs (Economic Development Manager 2005: 6). The combination of technical and entrepreneurial skills training became known as the T-E Programme.

Courses provided at the centre were deemed to offer good formal or self-employment options in the local economy. Early courses offered included bricklaying, carpentry, clothing manufacture, leatherwork, pottery and home management. Courses like English and computer practice were introduced later. While the College planned to provide an entrepreneurial option in all programmes, funding constraints meant that this was only included in some. Training was provided at FET and adult basic education and training (ABET) levels to accommodate the low level of education amongst people living in the area. Due to the poverty of target communities, the training provided was heavily subsidised.

The training centre was managed by the College as an unofficial campus until it was formally incorporated into the College through its merger. Its management was overseen by a governing council that included College, Municipality, local business and community representatives which was established in 1999 (Nel and Gibb 2005: 61). After the College’s merger, the Campus was brought under the control of the college-level governing council and its local council disbanded. By the end of 2005, the Campus was providing a range of programmes at ABET and FET levels.

Because of its seeming success, in the first few years of its existence, the Campus attracted national and international interest in its partnership-driven training approach to LED for unemployed people (NGO and College 2003c: 7-8).

The Technical-Enterprise Programme

The T-EP operated between 1999 and 2003 and over time evolved into a sophisticated model with a number of phases. College and NGO documentation describes the programme model as being “dynamic and ever changing” and a number of versions of it can be found (College 2003: 3 and College and NGO 2003: Appendix C: 2).

When the T-EP began, only technical and business skills training were provided but it was soon realised that for students to start businesses they would need support after completing their training. The enterprise development NGO then began to provide this support. It opened an office at the Campus to facilitate this process and when the Campus's Enterprise Development Unit was established, began to operate from this. The model then expanded to include business-hives, which were built at the Campus to house emerging entrepreneurs. A 'production unit' component was then added which provided work experience and an opportunity for students to learn about business in practice. Students with business potential were given an opportunity to start enterprises in campus business-hives and received business mentoring and support as required.

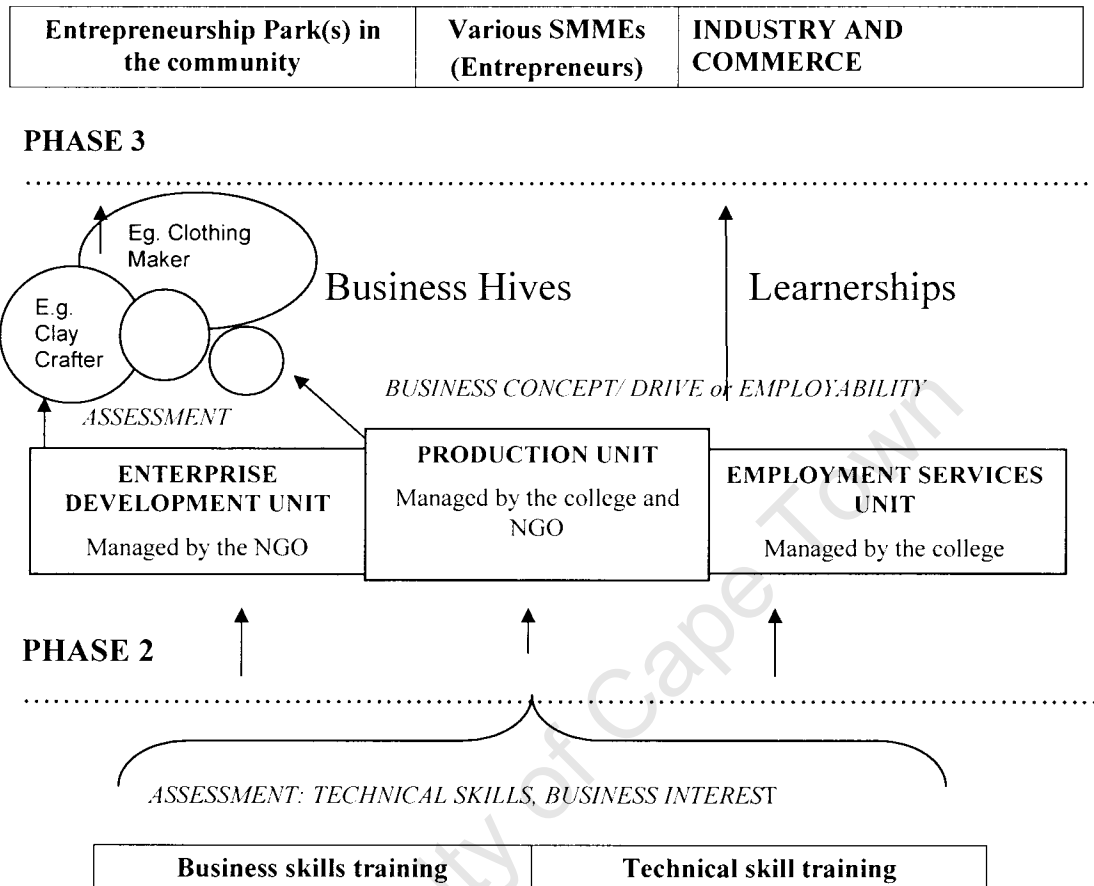
The flow diagram below illustrates the T-EP as a three-phase model and closely resembles its final incarnation as a route to formal and self-employment with the purpose of alleviating "poverty through job creation, job preparation and job placement" (NGO and College 2003: 4).

The flow from Phase 1 to Phase 3 is as follows. In Phase 1 students complete technical and business skills training. In Phase 2 students have the option of following three routes: they could be placed in employment through the Campus Employment Services Unit¹⁰ or through learnerships; they could go into one of the College's production units; or they could start their own businesses in a hive at the Campus. In Phase 3 graduates move off the Campus, either into formal employment or as established micro-entrepreneurs. The NGO partner was in the planning phase of establishing various community business parks that would house new micro-entrepreneurs and provide infrastructure and support necessary for long-term success¹¹.

¹⁰ The campus boasted a 74 percent job placement rate (College and NGO 2003: Appendix C: 1).

¹¹ The community business park component of the T-EP was part a separate NGO project that did not fall under the T-EP Partnership.

Figure 1. Structure of the Technical-Enterprise Programme Model



PHASE 1

Adapted from College and NGO 2003: Appendix C: 2.

Partner roles

The College was responsible for technical skills training, placing graduates in formal employment, and running the Campus. The NGO handled the entrepreneur development side of the T-EP which included managing the Campus Enterprise Development Unit. The College and NGO conceptualised and trialed the T-EP model together with some input from the Municipality partner. The Municipality's main role in the partnership was to provide property and buildings for the Campus, and in the early days, some programme and operational funding. The Municipality also provided a link to local government contacts and networks.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the national FET context which has shaped the transformation of the sector and its engagement in partnerships. As the partnership examined in this study focuses on entrepreneur development, this too was looked at in the context of FET colleges. An overview of the partnership was then provided. The next chapter provides the theoretical and empirical framework for the thesis by locating it in a discussion of relevant literature.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Through a review of relevant literature, this chapter provides a framework for understanding factors that might enable the sustainability of FET college partnerships – particularly those concerned with developing entrepreneurs in a community context. These kinds of partnerships can be classified as education, development or social partnerships (Seddon and Billet 2004: 5). While the notions of ‘partnership’ and ‘sustainability’ are both concerns of the thesis, the focus is on the former, and the latter is considered in relation to this.

As partnership knowledge cuts across a wide range of disciplines and sectors, the review process was initially broad and included literature from the business, development and education sectors. The focus then narrowed to partnerships in the further and vocational education and training sector¹² and more specifically to those with a social or community development orientation. While no literature was found that focused directly on the issue of partnership sustainability, a number of studies contained useful information pertaining to the issue. The literature found to be most relevant to the topic of FET college partnership sustainability came from the United Kingdom and Australia. There were also a number of useful South African FET college research studies.

This chapter starts by conceptualising the notion of partnership and then looks at partnerships in the South African FET college sector. A discussion on the issue of sustainability and why this is a concern for partnerships follows. A framework for understanding partnerships and their sustainability is then presented. Thereafter, factors that are considered likely to enable the sustainability of FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships are discussed. The relative importance of each factor as well as the influences between them are then noted in the conclusion.

¹² FET is known by various terms in different countries including further education (FE), vocational education and training (VET), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and technical and further education (TAFE).

3.2 Conceptualising partnership

What is partnership?

There is no single accepted definition of partnership and various terms are used to describe this including collaboration, network, linkage, cooperation and alliance (Callan and Ashworth 2004: 11 and Hutchinson and Campbell 1998: 2). Definitions tend to reflect the field and perspective of the author and as such may emphasise certain partnership features over others. In their review of literature from different fields, Hutchinson and Campbell (1998: 2) identified a number of common elements that characterise partnership:

- Partnerships bring together a range of interests drawn from more than one sector
- Partnerships seek to develop common aims and strategy to achieve them
- Partnerships share risk, resources and skills
- Partnerships seek to achieve mutual benefit and synergy

The definition provided by Callan and Ashworth (2004:10) adds a service-delivery dimension to the understanding of partnership that is relevant in an FET context:

Partnerships involve collaboration to enable delivery of a service or product, and within the partnership there is a sharing of resources to add value to the product or service for suppliers and customers.

Mohiddin's (1998:4) definition extends the understanding of partnership further. He sees partnership as the

... highest stage of working relationship between different people brought together by commitment to common objectives, bonded by long experiences of working together and sustained by subscription to common visions.

Important features of partnerships are thus that they are mature relationships that develop over time on the basis of shared experiences. They also bring together different interests, subscribe to common goals and seek mutual benefit and synergy between partners. Furthermore, collaboration and shared resources result in a value-added service, product or development of some form. Additionally, partnerships are characterised by joint

responsibility, mutual obligation and ownership, power-sharing, equality in decision-making, mutuality, trust and respect (Hauck and Land 2000: 2).

Partnerships are extremely varied and can involve two or more partners from the same or different sectors (Sommerlad et al. 1889: x, Nchabeleng 2000: 13 and Jaff et al. 2004: 74). Same sector partnerships are described as horizontal partnerships and different sector partnerships as vertical or symbiotic partnerships. The scope of a partnership can be simple or multifaceted and the level of engagement limited or intense.

Partnership is one of a number of inter-organisation relationship-types with other types often being less intense, clearer cut, briefer in existence and requiring minimal contact. Many relationships are based purely on an exchange of money for goods or services. Inter-organisation relationships frequently change over time and one kind of relationship may grow into another as is the case with partnerships. When a relationship changes, the expectations and terms that govern it (even if these are informal) will change too.

This thesis is concerned with understanding relationships that can be classified as ‘genuine’ partnerships, which Hauck and Land (2000: 2) note are the “most involved, intense and binding” of inter-organisational relationships. Why then do organisations engage in partnerships? A discussion of this follows.

Why Partnership?

Partnerships are widespread and are established to address a variety of economic, social, health, educational, development and service delivery goals (Hardman 2002b: 22 and Seddon et al. 2004: 127). They recognise that some goals are only attainable through combining the unique capabilities, networks and resources of different ‘base’ partners (Sommerlad et al. 1889: 93). Partnerships provide education institutions with a way to increase their business advantage and sustainability through better competitive positioning; improving their capacity, resource and funding bases; and focusing on their areas of strength rather than trying to do everything (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 9, 18 and 27 and Jaff et al. 2004: 73 and 90). They are also a means to improve the relevance of education and

training, increase and widen student access, reduce unemployment and contribute to social and economic development.

Partnerships bring many benefits that other kinds of relationships do not, like the possibility to combine competencies and assets and thereby achieve economies of scale (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 18). A regularly cited benefit is that they generate synergy. Examples of synergy include “policy synergy, which uses partners’ differences to create better solutions, ... [or] resource synergy, which is generated by producing efficiencies or by opening up new funding opportunities” (Hutchinson and Campbell 1998: 2).

Given that community-orientated FET college entrepreneur development partnerships are seen in this thesis to fall within the category of social partnerships, this partnership-type is clarified in the next sub-section.

Social partnerships

The term ‘social partnership’ is used in the literature to describe a broad range of partnerships that focus on addressing social and economic needs through community development or service delivery interventions (Seddon and Billet 2004:10-11). They are usually based on relationships between government, community groups and non-government development organisations. Vocational education and training social partnerships are considered a sub-set of the broader range and address community issues and needs through educational interventions like school-to-work programmes for youth-at-risk or job-creation programmes for unemployed people.

Seddon and Billet (2004: 15-17) distinguish between ‘community’ and ‘enacted’ social partnerships with the former being initiated by communities and the latter by external agencies. Social partnerships are seen to have accountabilities in two directions: to their sponsors and/or enacting agency, and to the communities they represent or serve.

A critical perspective on partnership – some issues

Authors raise various concerns about partnership which are summarised below¹³.

Partnership is loosely defined and many so-called partnerships are not true partnerships. The term partnership is often applied to a broad range of relationships. Those concerned with building genuine partnerships argue that more rigour is needed in defining partnership, as it is a collective effort and all involved need to have the same understanding of what they are working toward.

Partnerships are uncritically assumed to be beneficial. While there are many benefits to be gained by partnerships, these often under-perform or fail. Research on business and social partnerships showed that 90% of attempts to establish partnerships failed and less than 50% of those established were successful (Callan and Ashworth 2004: 10).

Partnership is based on the assumption that different interest groups can come together as equals and achieve common cause. This notion is informed by neo-liberal and pluralist ideology in terms of which service-delivery and development occur through collaboration between the state, business and civil society. For many authors, relationships are inherently unequal and always have competing interests which need to be openly acknowledged to succeed.

Partnership is not always the right relationship choice. Concern is raised that partnership is not only the most challenging of all relationship-types, to successfully develop and sustain, it is not always the best option to achieve intended goals. Authors argue that ‘fit to purpose’ rather than ‘politically correct’ relationships should be forged.

Framed by the understanding developed on partnership, the next section provides an overview of partnerships in the context of South African FET colleges.

¹³ The discussion in this sub-section, in particular, draws on Hauck and Land (2000: 2-4), Seddon et al. (2004: 123-124), Nchabeleng (2000: 11), Tennyson and Wilde (2000: 2), and Meyer and Taylor (2004: 1).

3.3 Partnerships in South African FET colleges

Partnership is loosely understood in the FET sector to refer to any relationship between a college and an external group (Powell and Hall 2004: 26). With this understanding of partnership, FET colleges report the existence of numerous 'partnerships'. In their audit of FET college links and partnerships, Powell and Hall (2004: 26-27) found a total of 1852, half of which were reported to be with business, 13 percent with government and 13 percent with community organisations. While there is no indication of how many of these relationships could be classified as genuine partnerships it is likely that a number displayed partnership features and could evolve into partnerships in time.

The Powell and Hall (2004: 58) study found that most college relationships were in their infancy with half having existed for two years or less and just over a quarter being more than four years old. This chapter shows that sustainable partnerships are founded on relationships that have developed over time. With this understanding, it is likely that many FET sector relationships in 2004 could not be classified as sustainable partnerships.

A range of partnerships are reported to exist in colleges including training, recruitment, service, sponsorship, learnership, resource/facility sharing, networking and social partnerships (Jaff et al. 2004: 74-75). Powell and Hall (2004: 41-42), found that nearly half of all college relationships were concerned with training and learnership provision. Resource sharing relationships were the next most common type. Colleges in the Hall and Powell study (2004: 62-63) indicated that they were primarily motivated to engage in partnerships by educational goals which included exposing students to industry, increasing student numbers and developing new programmes. Financial goals were, however, also an important motivation.

Most college relationships, at the time of the Hall and Powell study (2004: 39), were based on verbal or informal agreements and only 28 percent had formal written contracts. Furthermore colleges used different approaches to manage their relationships (Powell and Hall 2004: 59). In some cases these were informally managed by participating lecturers, divisional heads or managers. In others, they were more formally managed at programme-level by lecturers or divisional heads. There were also cases of these being centrally

managed through a dedicated partnership structure or by a management team member who had been assigned this as a duty. Additionally, some colleges reported the use of a mix of strategies.

The preceding sections have laid the foundations for understanding partnerships and the shape these take in the FET college sector. The following section examines the issue of sustainability and why this is a concern for partnerships.

3.4 Understanding sustainability

Understanding and measuring sustainability

‘Sustainability’ is a notion which, according to Bell and Morse, has achieved “Olympian proportions in all brands of ecology, rural development, institutional continuance, city and nation-building” (2000: 151). These authors note that attracting development funding is difficult “unless the words ‘sustainability’ or ‘sustainable’ appear somewhere in the proposal to the funding agency” (2000: 3). ‘Sustainability’ shares similarities with ‘partnership’ in that it has become a rhetorical term that is seen by some to lack substance (Bell and Morse 2000: 3). The term sustainable is also becoming part of partnership jargon in the FET college sector.

Central issues that arise when considering sustainability are: how one knows when it has been achieved, and how to measure it. Sustainability is a complex phenomenon and its precise meaning varies according to what it is being ascribed to, who is using the concept and in what context (Bell and Morse 2000: 5). A thing or effort can be described as sustainable as can an outcome, and sustainability is used in reference to things like cities, institutions or outcomes like development. Sustainability can thus refer to the ‘means-to-the-end’ or the ‘end’ but each is considered distinct from the other (Bell and Morse 2000: 66). This thesis is primarily concerned with sustainability of partnerships as a means-to-an-end.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles defines ‘sustain’ as, “To keep going, keep up (an action or process); to keep or maintain at the proper level or

standard; to preserve the status of’ and ‘sustainable’ as, “supportable; maintained” (Little et al 1973: 2205). In terms of these definitions when something is sustainable it has the potential to be kept going or maintained at a certain level or standard. To be practically useful, though, this definition needs further qualification. Importantly, the thing or effort that is being sustained needs clarification as does the level or standard at which it is to be sustained.

For Bell and Morse (2000: 12-15) to develop an understanding of sustainability, questions about spatial and time scales, and about quality first need to be answered as these provide the context in which sustainability occurs. The spatial scale concerns the scope of the thing or effort being sustained and timescale relates to the period over which sustainability is expected to be achieved. Quality is concerned with what sustainability might look like in relation to the thing or effort being sustained. This is considered more difficult to define because it is subjective and depending on their perspective, one person could see quality increasing while another could see it decreasing.

Morse and Bell (2000: 3 and 10) note that while sustainability may be difficult to define, some definition of the sustainable state being sought is needed or at least of the key factors that may decline or increase on the path to sustainability. Sustainability indicators are used as a way to gauge sustainability as these can give a sense of whether things are getting better or worse.

Although Bell and Morse (2000: 30) support the use of sustainability indicators, they stress that something as complex and subjective as sustainability cannot be reduced to a few objective measures. They note that if sustainability indicators are to be used they need to be based on “key components and interactions that represent the system as a whole” and that different interpretations of sustainability need to be acknowledged in the measurement process (2000: 18). Another matter to consider in relation to sustainability is whether the benefits of this outweigh the costs which might be financial, economic, environmental or moral (Bell and Morse 2000: 155).

The issue of how to analyse and measure sustainability in relation to partnerships is discussed further in the Section 3.5 and Chapter 6.

Institutional and project sustainability

As development interventions are delivered by institutions, institutional sustainability has come to be seen as essential to sustainable development (Bell and Morse 2000: 65). In a context of limited funding, strong institutions are viewed as the means to sustain development initiatives and outcomes after an aid agency withdraws. Furthermore, when the focus of sustainability is on institutions it is easier to measure because these are definable entities with boundaries and their sustainability can be based on measurable factors like financial self-reliance. Aid agencies also prefer a project approach to development as projects have defined space and time scales and their performance can be measured against pre-determined goals (Bell and Morse 2000: 61). Projects can also be extended through renewable funding linked to achievement.

Sustaining development projects

Even with a focus on institutional and project sustainability, research shows that development interventions are inherently difficult to sustain without external funding because these generally target resource-poor environments (Bell and Morse 2000: 66). Bell and Morse (2000: 66) report on an evaluation of World Bank projects which found only 52 percent of these to be sustainable and a similar evaluation of United States Agency for International Development projects that found only 11 percent to be sustainable.

The literature also shows that sustaining enterprise education initiatives in the long-term without donor support is extremely difficult. A comparative study of nineteen technical and vocational education and training projects implemented in Jamaica and The Gambia over sixteen years found that even successful projects became unsustainable when the donor-supported phase ended (Gamble 2003a: 39).

Development organisations are clearly in a catch twenty-two situation in relation to institutional and project sustainability. Donors expect them to become self-reliant but they have limited means to generate income because their target beneficiaries are poor people. The drive for financial sustainability can result in organisations ceasing to provide services

to those most in need due to their inability to pay for these and thereby invalidate their development objectives (Bell and Morse 2000: 70).

Why a concern with partnership sustainability?

To be worthwhile the investment of time, effort and resources in a partnership needs to be balanced by the benefits attained (Seddon and Billet 2004: 25 and Sommerlad et al 1998: 82). Partnerships, however, often do not meet expectations and their costs are reported to frequently outweigh their benefits (Tennyson and Wilde 2000: 2 and Powell and Hall 2004: 71).

The literature shows that partnership gains are often tied to longevity, and sustainability is thus a key factor in their success. Seddon and Billet (2004: 25), for instance, point out that social partnerships need to be durable to achieve their development goals and Hauck and Land (2000: 13) draw attention to the fact that the costs invested in a partnership are only recovered over time.

Much effort usually goes into partnership start-up and benefits are often only generated once this phase is complete and implementation is in progress. However, once a partnership is established and operating effectively it has the potential to generate ongoing benefits through expanding or embarking on new projects. Hence, from an efficiency point of view it is better to develop sustainable partnerships than to constantly start new ones. Balis and Melchior (2004: 2) note that sustainable partnerships allow partners to “avoid wasting time and energy on repetitive searches, introductions, and project growing pains” and to “focus on developing activities”.

Ultimately, any partnership needs to be sustained long enough to deliver benefits that exceed its costs, for it to be worth its while.

Having established the conceptual terms, the following sections develop the analytical framework for researching the case study partnership.

3.5 A framework for understanding partnerships and their sustainability

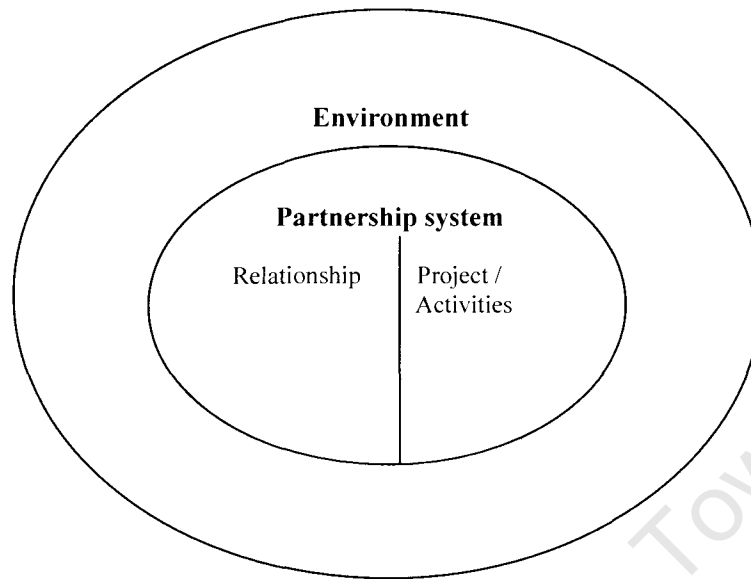
Partnerships are understood in this thesis to be complex dynamic systems that operate in specific contexts or environments which affect their development, effectiveness and sustainability¹⁴. The discussion and analysis of partnerships as context-bound systems that follows draws on Patton (2002: 40 and 120), Bell and Morse (2000: 80-109) and Nchabeleng (2000: 15-27). When a partnership is viewed as a system it is understood to consist of a number of interrelated parts, processes and relationships that combine in a dynamic way to form the whole which is more than the sum of its parts.

To understand a partnership system and the factors that enable it to achieve effectiveness and continuation, the analysis needs to take account of system relationships, interactions and dependencies and the affect of these on the functioning of the whole partnership. Additionally, the context within which the partnership operates needs to be examined with a view to how this impacts on it. Part of this analysis should include a consideration of the boundary between the partnership and its environment and the interactions that occur across this. A holistic approach to analysis keeps the whole system in perspective at all times while at the same time investigating the parts, processes, relationships and interactions that combine to form it. It is a continuous downward and upward analysis process.

The partnership system can be graphically represented as follows:

¹⁴ This understanding of partnership is informed by three of the qualitative research themes that shaped the research approach employed (discussed in Chapter 4). In terms of these a 'holistic perspective' is used to understand the phenomenon under study which is seen as a 'dynamic system' that operates within a 'specific context'.

Figure 2. The partnership system



Building on the literature (in particular Seddon and Billet 2004, Calan and Ashworth 2004, Sommerlad et al. 1998, Hauck and Land 2000 and Nchabeleng 2000), this thesis understands the partnership system as consisting of two mutually inclusive sub-systems, the relationship between the partners and the project or activities they are engaged in. The success and sustainability of a partnership as a whole depends on the success and sustainability of both the relationship element of a partnership and its activities. To their detriment, partnerships often focus all their attention on their combined activities and neglect the relationships that form their partnership. If the relationships on which a partnership is founded develop problems though, its continuation could be threatened.

An understanding of how partnership relationships work throws light on why attention needs to be paid to these. Partnership relationships are multifaceted and broadly operate at two levels, the partnership itself and partner organisations. Partnerships are further complicated in that at both the level of the partnership and organisation they are put into practice by people. Furthermore, while the relationship between the people and organisations in a partnership operates at a collective level, there are also sub-relationships that frequently exist between the individuals and organisations involved. For example, two partners in a partnership of three could be involved in a second partnership which could complicate matters as the third partner may feel excluded.

Partner organisations (and their broader environments which include their stakeholders and beneficiaries) provide the environment in which partnerships flourish or fail. If partner organisations become unstable or weak they may not have the capacity to nurture and sustain their partnerships and these will struggle to develop the strength they need to reach their full potential and survive over time.

Building on the understanding developed thus far, partnerships, and especially sustainable partnerships, are seen to be the outcome of a process that occurs over time. Sustainable partnerships are usually built on a foundation of successful effective relationships and earlier partnerships. Long-term partnerships are considered to go through three broad phases: establishment, development and maintenance (Seddon and Billet 2004: 5, Cauley 2000: 13-15 and Campus Compact 1999:1-2). The partnership is set up during the establishment phase and begins operating and growing in the development phase. The maintenance phase comes in when a partnership has been functioning for some time and has been deemed to be worth continuing. The basis for sustainable partnership is laid in the first two phases.

In summary, the partnership system consists of two sub-systems, its relationships and its activities, and develops in the context of a broader environment. Furthermore sustainable partnerships are built over time and go through different phases with the earlier phases providing the foundation for sustainability. This understanding of partnerships frames the discussion that follows on factors that enable sustainable partnerships to develop.

3.6 Key factors that enable the development of sustainable partnerships

The main aim of this thesis is to understand factors that might enable the sustainability of FET college entrepreneur development partnerships that have a community development focus. A set of interrelated factors that are considered to have the most affect on the

development and continuation of these kinds of partnerships, which was elicited for this thesis from the literature reviewed, is presented in this section¹⁵.

The logic that informs the order in which the factors are presented is as follows. The first factor concerns the broader environment and thus the frame within which partnerships develop. Factors 2 and 3 are concerned with starting and shaping partnerships and Factors 4 to 8 with partnership process. Factors 9, 10 and 11 move the discussion to a more general level.

Although the factors are discussed separately, together they provide a picture of what makes a partnership robust and sustainable. While all the factors are viewed as key to partnership sustainability, some are considered to be of primary importance and others secondary. There is also a strong relationship between the different factors and each influences and is influenced by others. The importance of each factor as well as the influences between them, are noted in Table 1 which is included in the conclusion to this chapter.

Factor 1: An institutional environment that is conducive to the development of sustainable partnerships

The strength and sustainability of a partnership is directly related to the capacity and partnership approach of the organisations that form it. There are five key factors that affect the capacity of institutions to effectively engage in partnership: restructuring, available funding, staff capacity, government policy and institutional orientation.

Firstly, because this usually results in new institutional arrangements and changes in key personnel, institutional restructuring tends to have a destabilising affect on partnerships (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 100). Jaff et al. (2004: 86) draw attention to the impact that FET college mergers had on their pre-existing partnerships and partnership activities which resulted in the closure of some partnerships and others having to be re-established.

¹⁵ Authors whose work has strongly informed this section include Seddon and Billet 2004, Sommerlad et al. 1998, Seddon et al. 2004, Nchabeleng 2000, Callan and Ashworth 2004, Jaff et al. 2004, Bateman and Clayton 2002, Malena 2004, and Hauck and Land 2000.

Furthermore, partnerships were affected by the establishment of new systems which often caused uncertain procedures and delays.

Secondly, financial well-being has a strong influence on the strength and stability of organisations and in public education institutions, like FET colleges, this is largely determined by government policy. The under-funding of the transformation and new mandate of FET colleges has already been discussed in Chapter 2. One implication of this was that colleges had limited funding for partnership activities and community-oriented work (Jaff et al. 2004: 84). While government funded organisations may struggle with funding, NGOs tend to be in a worse position because they do not receive state funding and service poor constituencies which makes them dependent on donor funding¹⁶. As a result the sustainability of NGOs is constantly under threat.

Thirdly, institutional capacity to engage in partnerships is also largely determined by staff who have available time and appropriate skills (Jaff et al. 2004: 43 and Callan and Ashworth 2004: 20-21). Useful partnership skills include networking, leadership, communication, negotiation, coping with diversity, and most importantly people skills. According to Jaff et al. (2004: 43 and 84) and the Centre for Extended Learning (2004: 51), not only do staff traditionally employed by FET colleges lack partnering expertise, their institutions have not provided time for them to engage in partnership activities. College partnerships are thus often driven by committed individuals who participate in these over-and-above their 'normal' jobs. Sustaining this level of activity in the long-term is difficult and the literature notes the need for dedicated staff and management time to support partnership activities. Senior management involvement is needed in partnerships and can be facilitated through making partnerships part of a senior manager's portfolio or through establishing a special post to oversee partnership activities (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 116 and Jaf et al. 2004: 85).

Fourthly, government policy, which affects the above three factors, ultimately determines the capability of public education institutions to engage in partnerships. It is clear (see Jaff et al. 2004: 13, Seddon and Billet 2004: 33-34 and Sommerlad et al. 1998: 96-98) that if partnerships are to develop and become durable features of the vocational and FET terrain,

¹⁶ The difficulties that organisations experience sustaining development projects in resource poor environments are discussed in Section 3.4.

government will need to provide more support through enabling policies and regulations and adequate resourcing.

Finally, an institution's conduciveness to partnership development and sustainability ultimately rests on the orientation it adopts. Research shows that organisations that have a 'partnering' and 'learning organisation' orientation are more successful at partnerships and derive more benefits from these (see Malena 2004: 20-21, Callan and Ashworth 2004: 12-13 Sommerlad et al. 1998: 30 and 83). Organisations with a 'partnering orientation' adopt a strategic approach to partnerships and develop skills, structures, and systems that support engagement in these. They also have an ethos that embraces change as an opportunity, allows experimentation and learning, and values what others have to offer. Organisational learning is considered to provide competitive advantage and ensure survival. A learning organisation is one that adapts and grows through continuously reflecting on, learning from and acting on their experiences. Strong institutional leadership and commitment are seen as necessary to develop a learning and partnership-orientation. Barriers to partnership, especially ones concerning institutional thinking and culture, also need to be overcome (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 96).

Factor 2: A mutual will to engage in the partnership due to continuing relevance and satisfactory level of outcomes and benefits

Authors agree that partnerships are only likely to succeed and survive in the long-term if they are motivated by mutual self-interest (see Sommerlad et al. 1998: 10-11; Mohiddin 1998: 4; Malena 2004: 4 and Bateman and Clayton 2002: 12). For Mohiddin (1998: 4), self-interest is the "bottom line in partnership". This creates the motivation for initial and continued engagement in a partnership and determines the strength of partner commitment. Self-interest is driven by anticipated and actual organisational gains and realised through organisational strategy. The strongest motivation for partnership is that it provides an advantage that could not be attained by working alone. Strong, sustainable partnerships are thus tied to organisational strategy and are based on the pursuit of mutual interests.

Ultimately partnerships need to produce benefits that are considered sufficiently valuable and mutual for partners to continue investing in them (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 26 and 115,

Callan and Ashworth 2004: 20, and Campus Compact 1999: 1). According to the literature the successful evolution and long-term effectiveness of partnerships depends on their achievement of mutual benefits for partners. Partnerships are also more likely to achieve mutual benefits if each partner has a clear understanding of their own and each other's objectives.

While a perception of balanced benefits from a partnership is important for its success and sustainability, Sommerlad et al. (1998: 90) note that partnerships are seldom equal as one partner may be more powerful than another or may have made a greater contribution. Benefits thus might not be equivalent. They note that this is not necessarily a problem for the partner benefiting less as long as their benefits are still strongly positive. Resentment tends to develop though if one partner seems to benefit at the expense of others. To survive in the long-term a partnership therefore needs to generate ongoing benefits that are acceptable to each partner and in line with their contributions and expected gains.

An organisation's interests may however change and if its partnerships fail to meet its new concerns, its motivation for continued involvement will decline. Falk (2000: 9-10) notes that a partnership's duration is linked to the relevance of the needs it meets and its ability to adjust to changing needs. To ensure continuing relevance, a partnership may need to change direction and change partners.

Factor 3: A shared vision and strategy for the partnership that aligns with each partner's goals and strategy

The development and continuation of a partnership is contingent on its partners achieving a common vision and purpose for it (Mohiddin 1989: 3-4; Malena 2004: 4 and 10; and Calan and Ashworth 2004: 18). Most authors see this as foundational to partnerships. A shared purpose stabilises partnerships by providing a framework for action and helping trust to develop (Falk 2000: 9). A mistake that partnerships often make though is to try to develop a vision too early (Cauley 2000:16). To be achievable a partnership's vision needs to be based on partner capabilities and the resources they can call upon and this may only become clear with time. As a partnership develops and partner circumstances, needs and motivations alter, changes to the vision may be required. Falk (2000: 10) notes that the

continuation of a partnership depends on its ability to adjust to changing needs and maintain a shared purpose as it evolves.

For a partnership to develop and achieve sustainability, its vision needs to be translated into a realisable shared strategy (see Malena 2004: 9-11, Seddon and Billet 2004: 27, Bateman and Clayton 2002: 12, and Hauck and Land 2000: 9). This provides a framework for joint implementation and assessment of achievements through clarifying the partnership's objectives, roles and responsibilities, activities, methodology and measures of success. In effective partnerships partners play different but complementary roles and the strategy developed reflects this. Authors like Malena (2004: 9) also stress the value in having a results-orientation as this provides direction and enables monitoring. Furthermore, an incremental approach based on achieving short-term goals toward long-term goals allows early and ongoing successes (Hauck and Land 2000: 9). Project approaches are seen to provide a good framework for partnership planning and implementation. While effective partnership operation depends on a common strategy, the literature shows that this tends to emerge through initial work together and needs to be flexible enough to evolve in line with lessons learned and changing requirements.

Factor 4: Sufficient alignment between partner institutions

Effective and long-lasting partnerships usually have a good fit between partners in relation to their goals, capacity, culture and ways of working (see Callan and Ashworth 2004: 18, Sommerlad et al. 1998: 28 and Malena 2004: 4). 'Strategic fit' and 'cultural fit' are considered key to effective partner alignment (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 28). Partners with 'strategic fit' are similar in size and strength and have complementary goals and assets that if combined could result in competitive advantage and synergy. Partners with 'cultural fit' either have similar cultures and ways of working or make the effort to learn about and accommodate each other. Jointly understood problems, needs and opportunities result in a similar strategic orientation and cultural alignment is facilitated by similar values and approaches.

However, learning about and finding ways to work with another organisation's culture and systems can be a significant challenge in partnerships (Callan and Ashworth 2004: 35).

Government institutions (like colleges) tend to be inflexible and to have cumbersome decision-making procedures which can compromise partnership operations through causing delays and frustrations (Callan and Ashworth 2004: 36 and 46 and Hardman 2002b: 25). Seddon and Billet (2004: 37) note though that social partnerships depend on organisational arrangements that enable reciprocity between partners and some change in bureaucratic approaches is often required to facilitate this.

As skills and power make organisations inherently unequal, achieving equality in partnership is difficult (Burke 1997: 1.20 and Sommerlad et al. 1998: 21 and 72). Nevertheless, while some balance in partner strength and status is advantageous, inequality does not necessarily make a partnership unstable or fail. The attitude partners have toward each other is considered more important than equality. Partner differences are also viewed in the literature as an opportunity for synergy rather than competition to develop.

Research indicates the need for sufficient common ground between organisations for partnerships to begin and the need for the alignment between them to increase if their partnerships are to continue over time. It is also important that partners acknowledge that their way of doing things is not the only way and try not to impose this on others (Seddon et al. 2004: 129). Alignment between partners facilitates the development of interdependency which is needed for mature sustainable partnerships to develop (Seddon and Billet 2004: 12)

Factor 5: Resources that enable partnership development and continuation

A major factor in the sustainability of partnerships over time is continuing resources (Seddon and Billet 2004: 28 and 36, Sommerlad et al 1998: 116 and Tennyson and Wild 2000: 60). Resources for partnerships come from two sources: partners who contribute human, physical and/or financial resources, and external sources through which resources are generated in the name of the partnership. While resources from both of these sources are important, Tennyson and Wild (2000: 16 and 60) note that robust partnerships are based on the resource commitments made by their partners.

FET colleges and NGOs, however, have limited resources to commit to their partnerships due to the financial constraints they operate under. Furthermore partnerships that target poor communities have limited potential to generate income through services provided and usually depend on donor funding which is finite. Access to resources thus impacts at a fundamental level on the capacity of social and development partnerships to achieve their outcomes and continue over time.

Social and development partnerships initially need resources to get through the establishment phase and when operational, they need to be able to secure resources on a continuing basis to survive over time. Seddon and Billet (2004: 18) note that while the enacting agent in a social partnership usually funds the start-up phase, funding generally needs to be secured for continuation. Because of their funding arrangement, social partnerships often become trapped in short-term project funding cycles and struggle to consolidate their resource bases in a sustainable way (Seddon and Billet 2004: 18). Seddon and Billet (2004: 32) note that the funding approach for a partnership needs to match the type of partnership. While seed or short-term funding is appropriate for short-term social partnerships, long-term partnerships need to be self-funded to some extent.

Human resources are also central to the development and continuation of partnerships. Without people, these will not form or function (Nchabeleng 2000: 8). Furthermore, Seddon and Billet (2004: 29) note that social partnerships tend to rely heavily on the voluntary effort of individuals employed by partner organisations who participate on their behalf. These individuals contend with various competing demands on their time and usually have to justify to their organisations how the time they spend in a partnership is of benefit. Social partnerships also frequently draw on the labour of unpaid community representatives. Another important factor that impacts on partnership sustainability is the continued involvement of key individuals in them (Sommerlad et al. 1998 100 and Falk 2000: 10).

Factor 6: Formalisation of the partnership agreement

The partnership establishment phase usually results in some form of agreement on the vision and strategy of the partnership. The literature shows that early partnership

development benefits from looser arrangements as these allow space for the relationship and work to be tested (Tennyson 1998: 12 and Cauly 2000: 16). A formalised agreement can, however, stabilise an established partnership and facilitate its continuation. Memorandum of understanding of between two and five years are the most common formal agreement-type (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 74). Flexible agreements that allow changes work well as these can accommodate partners changing requirements and evolving relationships. Furthermore, five-year agreements provide for more stable and strategic partnerships.

Factor 7: A healthy partnership ‘relationship’

Partnership relationships occur between people and operate at partnership and organisation level. Furthermore, the long-term viability of a partnership depends on the quality of the relationships between the people and organisations that form it (Seddon and Billet 2004: 12 and Callan and Ashworth 2004: 13). The quality of the relationship between organisations is, however, strongly influenced by the relationship and trust individuals in the partnership have developed. People are at the heart of successful long-term partnerships.

Strong enduring partnership ‘relationships’ are based on qualities like trust, respect, goodwill, understanding, equity, integrity and accountability (see Somerlad et al. 1998: 78-79, Mohiddin 1989: 3-4, Bateman and Clayton 2002: 12, and Falk 2000: 10). Trust and goodwill in particular are seen to stabilise partnerships by increasing tolerance and communication between partners and facilitating problem-solving.

For Mohiddin (1989: 3-4) trust, respect, ownership and equality are underlying principles of partnership. Trust is seen to occur when people share experiences, expectations, values and commitment. Respect is based on acknowledging another’s value. Ownership concerns taking responsibility and being held accountable. With regard to equality, Mohiddin (1989: 4) believes that unless there is “real and substantive equality between partners”, partnership sustainability will be difficult¹⁷. Research indicates though that if inequalities

¹⁷ Concerns in relation to attaining equality in partnerships are discussed in point 3.2 and Factor 4.

in partnership are not too great and are acknowledged and managed they need not compromise sustainability (Burke 1997: 1.20 and Sommerlad et al. 1998: 21 and 72).

It is important that problems in partnerships are resolved immediately as these can threaten their stability (Tennyson and Wild 2000: 64, and Hauck and Land 2000: 10). Even small misunderstandings and set-backs can create suspicion and undermine trust. However, while partnerships should strive for harmonious operations, conflict is not a sign of a dysfunctional or failed partnership (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 25 and Seddon et al. 2004: 130). Because they combine different interests, cultures and levels of power and try to steer these toward common goals, conflict is a feature of partnerships. However, through resolving conflict, partnerships can achieve greater clarity and unity.

While successful sustainable partnerships are built on healthy relationships, these take time and effort to develop and require continuous nurturing to grow. Sebastian et al. (2000: 76) also warn that trust developed should not be “overly dependent on a few visionary or creative leaders ... [as it] can become fragile”.

Factor 8: Strong enabling leadership and effective management and communication

Leadership at organisation and partnership-level is a key determinant in partnership success and longevity (Falk 2000: 11, Sommerlad et al. 1998: 110 and 115; Hardman 2002b: 32 and Bateman and Clayton 2002: 13). This was the finding of a large study on private sector partnerships in the United States carried out in the early 1990s which showed that effective leaders enabled “strategic, tactical, operational, interpersonal, and cultural integration” (Bateman and Clayton 2002: 13). Falk (2000: 11) stresses “Successful partnerships begin and are carried into practice through leadership”. An important part of the partnership leadership challenge is managing the tensions that arise when different cultures work together.

Falk (2000: 2) views ‘enabling leadership’, which is situation-based, builds trust and enables people, as the most appropriate style for partnerships. Sommerlad et al. (1998: 115) note that at an institutional-level, leaders need a long-term perspective for sustainable

partnerships to develop which includes building organisational commitment to and capability to engage in these.

The literature also indicates that management and communication are essential to the successful development and continuation of long-term partnerships (see Sommerlad et al. 1998: 72, Bateman and Clayton 2002: 12, Hauck and Land 2000: 10 and Seddon and Billet 2004: 25-26). The relationship between partners needs to be managed as does the relationship between the partnership and its stakeholders and beneficiaries. Seddon and Billet (2004: 25) note that the capacity of social partnerships depends on the way these relationships are developed and managed. Diversity and inequalities also need to be carefully managed in partnerships and especially in development and social partnerships which often bring together widely diverse groups (Callan and Ashworth 2004: 20 and Seddon and Billet 2004: 22, 24 and 36).

The boundary between the partnership and its environment also requires management. Sommerlad et al. (1998: 29) discuss boundary management and note the need to agree on which areas of activity are within the boundary and are thus joint ones, and which fall outside and are part of each partner's exclusive control. Interactions across the boundary and alignment between partners with regard to their interests, cultures, approaches and systems need continuous management.

Additionally, management is needed of the implementation of the partnership's activities, its outcomes and benefits, and its vision and strategy which may require revision over time. Furthermore, review and evaluation processes require management as does the incorporation of lessons learned into the partnership. One of the most important tasks of partnership management is problem-solving which needs to occur in relation to the partnership's activities and relationships.

Effective and frequent communication is required between partners for partnerships to develop and succeed over time. Importantly, trust is facilitated by regular, clear and open communication based on full disclosure of relevant information. Social partnerships also require competence in intercultural communication. Strong partnership communication channels are viewed as vital when partner organisations have hierarchical lines of communication.

Various structures are used to manage partnerships with steering and advisory committees being common in vocational and education training partnerships (Hutchinson and Campbell 1998: 4 and Callan and Ashworth 2004: 44). Research indicates that the most effective structures are flexible and accountable; flexible structures enable new partners to be admitted and accountable ones make information-sharing and decision-making visible and accessible.

Factor 9: Community support gained and retained

Seddon and Billet (2004: 6) note that the development and success of social partnerships as agencies of community development depend on their gaining and maintaining the support and participation of communities. A community's support and trust, however, cannot be mandated and must be earned. In their research Seddon and Billet (2004:28) found that communities tended to support initiatives they believed were working in their interests and trust was based on their assessment that they were being handled responsibly and respectfully. These authors point out though that

...trust is fragile... Breaches of trust can often be simple things – an insensitive comment, lack of recognition of the effort being put into an initiative, failure to follow through on an activity. Such breaches ... require a lot of repair work (2004:28).

Seddon et al. (2004: 137) note that while the legitimacy of a social partnership depends on community support, the efforts that go into building community relationships are often overlooked by sponsors.

Factor 10: Partnership learning, adaptability and evolution

'Evolutionary ability' is considered to be one of the most fundamental factors that determine partnership sustainability and learning and adaptability enable this (see Sommerlad et al. 1998: 15 and 30, Heady 2000: 71-76, and Nchabeleng 2000: 10). Sommerlad et al. note that successful partnerships are

...highly evolutionary, going through a sequence of interactive cycles of learning, re-evaluation and readjustment. Failing partnerships conversely, were inert, with little learning ... [and] frustrated expectations” (1998: 30).

To remain relevant, improve and survive over time, partnerships need to be able to evolve and self-renew and learning is essential to this process. Long-term sustainable partnerships show some evolution which may result in their taking on new goals, activities, methods and/or partners or shedding these. Evolution tends to occur when a partnership generates mutual benefits and continuously adds value that partners could not achieve alone (Sommerlad et al. 1998: 26).

Successful partnering is seen as a continuous process of reflection, learning, renewal and change and sustainable partnerships are the outcome of a long process of development and evolution (Heady 2000: 71 and Nchabeleng 2001: 36). Effective partnerships are understood to develop in a spiral with each cycle building on the next and partnership sustainability is facilitated by partners regularly revisiting and reconfirming the direction being taken.

For partnership learning to occur, regular monitoring, review and evaluation are thus necessary. Sommerlad et al. (1998: 82) suggests two focuses for this: (i) the partnership and how well it is working; and (ii) the outcomes or benefits of the partnership and whether these are as expected and impacting sufficiently on the organisation. Seddon and Billet (2004 6) stress that evaluation in social partnerships needs to focus as much on relationship-building as it does on outcomes, as the former determines the latter.

Factor 11: Institutionalisation

Malena (2004: 15) notes that partnerships are frequently made up of individuals who participate in them with little support from or influence in their institutions. This is however not a good foundation for the development of strong sustainable partnerships. While partnerships generally start out and grow on the basis of individual relationships, these need to be transformed into organisational relationships if they are to remain relevant and continue over time (see Freyder et al. 2000: 23, Hauck and Land 2000: 9-10, Callan and Ashworth 2004: 60, and Sommerlad et al. 1998: 116).

Tennyson and Wilde (2000: 76) describe institutionalisation as a process of “moving from an ad-hoc set of actions by selected individuals to a more regulated approach involving the whole organisation”. The literature shows that the process of institutionalising a partnership involves: anchoring it in organisational strategy; giving it a high institutional profile and building staff support for it; ensuring that organisational systems and structures support its functioning; managing it upward to ensure senior management commitment; and developing partnering skills in the organisation to avoid dependence on a few individuals. Organisations that adopt a partnering orientation have in place the foundations on which to institutionalise their partnerships as these will have been established in line with organisational strategy, and structures, systems and capacity that support partnership work will have been developed.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that partnerships are complex and multilayered organisational relationships that are challenging to develop and sustain. Nevertheless, they have the potential to exceed the benefits produced by other relationship-types and to generate ongoing benefits if sustained over time.

Partnership sustainability is clearly affected by numerous factors. Those considered most relevant to FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships were presented in the preceding section. The table below lists these factors and extends the understanding developed of them. It specifies whether a factor operates at the level of the partnership or environment.

Furthermore, the level of importance of each factor is indicated in the table as are the influences between factors. Primary factors are considered to have a fundamental influence on the sustainability of FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships. Secondary factors are slightly less important and may affect sustainability through influencing other factors.

Blocks that have been shaded in the table indicate that the factor either influences or is influenced by all other factors and this is an indication of the degree of importance of the factor in the partnership system as a whole.

Table 1. Partnership factors: system-level, level of importance and influences

| FACTORS | System-level | Level of importance | Influences | Influenced by |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Factor 1: An institutional environment that is conducive to the development of sustainable partnerships | E | P | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 | 5, 8, 9, 10 & 11 |
| Factor 2: A mutual will to engage in the partnership due to continuing relevance and satisfactory level of outcomes and benefits | E & P | P | 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 | 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 |
| Factor 3: A shared vision and strategy for the partnership that aligns with each partner's goals and strategy | E & P | P | 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 10 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 10 & 11 |
| Factor 4: Sufficient alignment between partner institutions | E & P | S | 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11 | 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 & 11 |
| Factor 5: Resources that enable partnership development and continuation | E & P | P | 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 & 11 | 1, 2, 8, 9 & 11 |
| Factor 6: Formalisation of the partnership agreement | P | S | 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 & 11 | 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 11 |
| Factor 7: A healthy partnership 'relationship' | P | P | 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 & 11 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 & 11 |
| Factor 8: Strong supportive leadership and effective management and communication | E & P | P | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11 | 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10 & 11 |
| Factor 9: Community support gained and retained | E & P | S | 2, 3, 5, 7 & 10 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, & 11 |
| Factor 10: Partnership learning, adaptability and evolution | P | P | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 7 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 11 |
| Factor 11: Institutionalisation | E & P | P | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 10 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10 |
| KEY | | | | |
| System-level | | Level of importance | | |
| E: environmental factor | | P: primary factor | | |
| P: partnership factor | | S: secondary factor | | |

The next chapter outlines the research methodology which framed this thesis.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

A qualitative single case study approach was used in this thesis to develop an understanding of partnership sustainability and the factors that might enable this in an FET college entrepreneur development setting. The T-EP Partnership was selected as the case for study as it provided a good opportunity to learn about how an FET college entrepreneur development partnership had developed over time and the factors that had affected its sustainability.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the research strategy employed and then outlines the data collection and analysis approach. It goes onto a discussion of the strategy used to ensure the study's quality and credibility. Ethical considerations are then considered and finally, the limitations of the study are presented.

4.2 Research strategy

Overview

This study employs a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research aims to understand a phenomenon or action in its context through a focus on in-depth investigation and detailed description rather than explanation (see Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270 and Stake 1995: 38). Importantly it builds an understanding of events and actions through the perspective of those involved. Terre Blanche et al. (2006: 346) describe qualitative research as being primarily "concerned with making sense of human experience from within the context and perspective of human experience". Case studies focus attention on one or a few instances of the same phenomenon or situation thereby enabling the development of an in-depth understanding of each case in its contexts and the factors and events affecting it (Babbie 2004: 293).

Patton (2002: 40-41) outlines twelve key qualitative inquiry themes that together can be used as a strategic framework for qualitative research design, data collection and analysis. These are summarised in the table below and were the framing principles of this study.

Table 2. Themes of qualitative enquiry

| Design strategies | Data collection strategies | Analysis strategies |
|--|---|--|
| 1. <i>Naturalistic inquiry</i> : Studying real-world situations without pre-determined constraints | 4. <i>Qualitative data</i> : In-depth inquiry leading to 'thick description' ¹⁸ ; capture interviewee perspectives | 8. <i>Unique case orientation</i> : Each case is analysed in its own right |
| 2. <i>Emergent design flexibility</i> : Open to adapting design as understanding deepens or situations change | 5. <i>Personal experience and engagement</i> : Researcher "gets close" to object of study and uses own experience and insights to develop understanding | 9. <i>Inductive analysis and creative synthesis</i> : Immersion in data to discover patterns, themes and interrelationships |
| 3. <i>Purposeful sampling</i> : Information rich cases selected to provide valuable insights on topic of study | 6. <i>Empathic neutrality and mindfulness</i> : Interviewing stance is neutral, open, sensitive and respectful | 10. <i>Holistic perspective</i> : Phenomenon under study seen as a complex system; focus is on interdependencies and system dynamics |
| | 7. <i>Dynamic systems</i> : Attention to process, changing system and situation dynamics | 11. <i>Context specific</i> : Findings placed in social, historical, and temporal contexts |
| | | 12. <i>Voice, perspective, and reflexivity</i> : Researcher owns and is reflective about her/his perspective |

Adapted from Patton (2002: 40-41).

Case study

This thesis employed a case study design, and as such adopts a central qualitative research design strategy (Patton 2002: 297). According to Stake (1995: 36) the primary purpose of a case study is to "come to know extensively and intensively" about a single case within its contexts. He notes:

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. ...We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction

¹⁸ Denzin (1998: 324) explains the concept of thick description as follows: "A thin description simply reports facts, independent of intentions or circumstances. A thick description, in contrast, gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organised the experience, and reveals the experience as a process".

with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake 1995: xi).

The 'case' is the unit of analysis in a case study and can be "a person, an event, a programme, an organisation, a time period, a critical incident, or a community" (Patton 2002: 55). How does one go about selecting a case to study? For Stake (1995: 4), the most important criterion is that the case selected should be able "to maximise what we can learn". He believes that researchers should seek out cases that "are likely to lead us to understandings, to assertions, perhaps even to modifying of generalisations". Purposeful sampling is commonly used as it enables the selection of cases that are 'information rich' and 'illuminative' and provide examples of and insight into the phenomenon being studied (Patton 2002: 40). Cases that could potentially "yield insights about principles that might be applied elsewhere" can also be specifically selected (Patton 2002: 581). This raises the issue of application of case study findings in different contexts and thus the issue of generalisation.

Generalisation of case study findings

Qualitative case studies focus on one or a few purposefully selected cases that will generate in-depth understanding and insights on the issues being examined. Although a single or a few cases may have similarities with other cases, representation of a broader population cannot be claimed in a case study (Stake 1995: 4 and Patton 2002: 46). Nevertheless while the focus of a case study is always to understand the case, a goal of this is often to provide insights and lessons that are applicable to other cases.

Patton (2002: 581) notes that certain types of cases are selected and studied specifically because they are broadly relevant and can provide insights and lessons that can be applied in other situations. Critical cases, for instance, are cases that are seen to be broadly representative in the sense that "if it is true of this one case, it's likely to be true of all other cases" (Patton 2002: 243). Patton (2002: 236) views critical cases as ones that can "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge". Although the study of one critical case "does not technically permit broad generalisations

to all possible cases, logical generalisations can often be made from the weight of evidence produced in a single, critical case” (Patton 2002: 236).

Generalisation in case study can thus be achieved firstly, through selecting a case that holds relevance for other cases and secondly, through applying logical or analytic generalisation (see Patton 2002: 236 and 581-584)¹⁹. The first task of the researcher is to describe the particularities of the specific case and its context in as much detail as possible as this provides the basis for recognising similarities with other cases. Thereafter through a process of logical generalisation or ‘extrapolation’ links can be sought with other similar situations and applicable lessons derived. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 283) note that the “generalisability of case study findings is demonstrated through showing the linkages between findings and previous knowledge”. As such the researcher needs to provide evidence for their generalisations and link their findings with similar cases and other research. They refer to this process as ‘analytic generalisation’.

The T-EP Partnership was viewed as a critical case which because of its broader relevance could generate insights and lessons on partnership sustainability that would be applicable not only to other entrepreneur development partnerships but also to a broader range of FET college partnerships. The characteristics that led to its selection are discussed in the next section.

Selection of the T-EP Partnership case

This T-EP Partnership was purposefully selected as it displayed the following features: it was an entrepreneur development partnership with a community-orientation operating in a FET college; it could be classified as a ‘genuine’ partnership (for a least a period of its

¹⁹ In his discussion of the issue of generalisation and how to approach this in qualitative case study research Patton (2002: 581-584) provides an overview of key issues raised by and strategies employed by a number of influential authors. Cronbach (1975) notes that because social phenomena are so variable and context bound, generalisations tend to decay. He suggests that generalisations should thus be presented as working hypotheses within the context of a detailed presentation of the research and its findings. Stake (1995) stresses the need for ‘particularisation’ before patterns are sought with other cases and introduces the notion of ‘naturalistic generalisation’ which is based on readers making generalisations from the case study on the basis of their prior knowledge and experience. Guba and Lincoln (1981) use the terms transferability and ‘fittingness’ as substitutes for generalisation and see transferability between two contexts as being the result of the similarity or ‘fittingness’ between them. Cronbach and Associates (1980) also introduce the notion of ‘extrapolation’ which is a process of speculation on the possible application of findings to other similar situations.

life); and during its height, it was considered successful, ground breaking and, in many ways a role model. It was embarked on with a view to achieving long-term goals and sustainability was thus a concern for the partnership. Finally, although the partnership had come to an end, it survived for five years and thus provided an opportunity to study factors that had enabled its development and continuation as well as those that had ultimately led to its demise.

Flexible design

A flexible research design was used which was fine-tuned through an iterative process as the study unfolded and insights were gained about the topic, the College, the College's partnerships and particularly the T-EP Partnership. The literature review was central to the process of focusing and fine-tuning the design as was the initial review of documentation on the College and its partnerships. Four preliminary interviews were also held which helped to focus the research and to select the T-EP Partnership as the case to study. The research process followed is described in Appendix 1.

4.3 Data collection, analysis and presentation

Framework for data collection and analysis

Data collection and analysis was guided by the three research questions developed for the study (see Chapter 1) which were translated into broad themes and provided the basis for the development of sub-themes and questions to explore. The three overarching themes were:

- Theme 1: Key characteristics of a sustainable FET college entrepreneur development partnership
- Theme 2: Factors that affect the sustainability of an FET college entrepreneur development partnership
- Theme 3: Lessons for developing and maintaining sustainable partnerships

Building an understanding of the first theme was seen as foundational to understanding the other two themes.

To understand Theme 1, the notion of ‘partnership’ needed to be examined as did the notion of ‘sustainability’. These two notions then needed to be understood in combination. Furthermore, this understanding needed to be developed within the context of FET colleges and more particularly, entrepreneur development partnerships.

Theme 2 was developed through generating a list of factors that might affect the sustainability of entrepreneur development-type partnerships in an FET college context. The literature reviewed provided the starting point for this process. The initial list was long but was fine-tuned to eleven key factors that were seen to be most likely to enable the sustainability of these kinds of partnerships. The factors were formulated over time throughout the literature review and interview processes, which overlapped. Whilst the researcher went into interviews with a preconceived notion of factors that affect partnership sustainability, these were not presented to interviewees to comment on or rate. Instead interviewees were asked to describe how their partnership had developed and operated over time and reflect on factors that had enabled its initial success and sustainability as well as those that had caused its decline.

Theme 3 was explored through the literature review and field research. Lessons on how to develop and maintain sustainable partnerships emerged through the investigation of factors that enable and inhibit partnership sustainability.

Data collection methods

The data collection strategies outlined in Table 2 above informed the data collection process. The aim was to collect detailed, in-depth, accurate and experience-rich data, on the T-EP Partnership from the perspectives of the different actors involved. Data was collected through interviews and document review.

Interviews

A total of fourteen interviews were conducted. The four preliminary interviews were held between December 2004 and May 2005 and the rest were carried out in August and September 2005. Interviews were on average one and a half hours long with the shortest one being thirty minutes and the longest three hours.

There were five key informants in this study as follows:

- From the College: the CEO and the DCEO Innovation and Development²⁰
- From the Municipality: the Economic Development Manager
- From the NGO: the Provincial Coordinator and the Enterprise Development Unit Coordinator

Other interviews held were:

- From the College: three staff members, two of whom had been involved in the partnership's activities, one as a trainer and the other as production manager; and the 2005 Campus Manager of the case study campus. A group interview was also held with staff from the college's engineering campus who could provide information on the college's industry partnerships²¹
- From the NGO: a trainer who had been involved in the partnership's activities
- A representative from an organisation that was involved in another partnership at the case study campus which had intersected with the T-EP Partnership

A fairly detailed interview guide was prepared to ensure that all important issues were covered²². While the same guide was used in every interview, interviewees were only asked questions that were relevant to them. Furthermore, the length of the interview guide necessitated that it was spread over a number of interviews with some of the key

²⁰ As has already been noted, the DCEO Innovation and Development was previously the head of the case study campus.

²¹ This was one of the four preliminary interviews that were held. A preliminary interview was also held with the CEO, the DCEO Innovation and Development and the Provincial Coordinator of the NGO, who at the time was acting as the Campus Manager of the case study campus.

²² An 'interview guide' is one qualitative interview approach (see Patton 2002: 343 and 349). An interview guide provides a list of topics or questions within which an interviewer can explore and probe research issues and questions. It ensures that the same line of enquiry is followed with each interviewee. The interviewer decides on the sequence of the questions asked and precise wording during the interview.

informants. Each interview was planned beforehand and informed following interviews by influencing what questions were asked and the order of these. In some cases issues that arose in one interview were translated into questions that were asked of specific informants. As the research progressed, some adaptations were made to the guide. The interview guide used is attached as Appendix 2.

Interviews were digitally and manually recorded during each interview. After completing an interview, it was transcribed and notes were made on preliminary findings and issues that needed investigation in future interviews and documents reviewed.

Document review

Documents are a rich source of information in case study research as they can provide information about many things that cannot be observed, may reveal private interchanges, or provide information about goals or decisions the researcher may not have found out about otherwise. Documents can either be used for direct learning or to suggest different paths of inquiry that could be beneficial²³.

Relevant documents on the College, case study campus, case study partnership and other partnerships were collected and reviewed²⁴. Documentation collected for review included: the College's strategic plan and other documents that threw light on the strategy and approach of the College and its two partners in this study; reports from the College's Innovation and Development Department²⁵; various partnership project proposals, business plans, agreements and reports; relevant research reports; letters, email correspondence and minutes of meetings; and copies of the College newsletter.

The documents collected were taken through two processes of review. They were initially reviewed to gain a better understanding of the College's different partnerships and played a key role in the selection of a case to study and helped to focus the research and raise issues to explore.

²³ See Patton 2002: 293-294, Stake 1995: 68 and Yin 1994: 81-83 for a discussion on the value and use of documentation in qualitative and case study research.

²⁴ Partnerships that initially seemed like potential cases for the thesis as well as ones that could throw light on the college's partnerships and its approach to these were investigated.

²⁵ As noted already, the College's Innovation and Development Department was ultimately responsible for its partnerships.

Documents considered most relevant to the topic and T-EP partnership were then subjected to a more in-depth review and analysis. At this stage, the review served to provide background and general information on the T-EP Partnership's three core partners and their relationships, the case study campus, and the T-EP model.

Data analysis and interpretation

A qualitative interpretive approach to data analysis was employed. In essence this involved an iterative process of inducing themes and patterns in the data, coding data, matching coded data to the themes and patterns and, as necessary, revising themes and patterns. Patton's (2002: 40) five themes of qualitative data analysis described in Table 2 framed the analysis.

The inductive analysis process was informed by the three themes developed from the research questions and the preliminary list of factors that were seen to affect partnership sustainability that the researcher had developed from the literature review and during the data collection process. Stake (2002: 78-84) notes that even though an inductive approach seeks coding categories in the data and does not impose pre-determined ones, coding categories are usually known in advance and come from the research questions which provide a template for analysis. In fact, he believes that pre-established codes should be used for the most important data but that during data analysis these can be amended and new ones should be induced for the data.

An iterative process that involved going back and forth between the data and literature was used to arrive at the final set of factors that provided the framework used to analyse and present the findings. A holistic approach was taken to analysing the case which was viewed as a dynamic context-bound system. As such system dynamics, processes and relationships were examined in combination and separately as were the contextual factors that framed its functioning and continuation²⁶.

²⁶ Chapter 3, Section 3.5, presents a framework for understanding partnerships as complex systems that operate in specific contexts and outlines the holistic approach used to understand and analyse them in this thesis. As such it is not repeated again in this chapter.

The findings, backed up by previous research and knowledge, provided the basis for the lessons formulated as well as the development of an ideal-type sustainable partnership, both of which are presented in the conclusion (Chapter 6). Ideal-types are constructed from research findings as a way to further clarify the phenomenon under study and as a point of comparison for other examples (see Patton 2002: 458-460). In the case of this thesis, an ‘ideal-type sustainable partnership’ was characterised as a basis for understanding the important dimensions that make up a sustainable partnership.

Refer to Appendix 3 for an overview of the data analysis process followed.

Presenting the findings

Detailed description forms the foundation of all qualitative reporting (Patton 2002: 438). The goal of the qualitative report writer is to “provide sufficient details to help readers gain a sense of having been there with you” and to reach a different conclusion if needs be (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 568). This thesis presents the case study within the confines of the standard research report structure of a master’s thesis over two chapters. Chapter 2 introduced the T-EP Partnership and provided a brief overview of its partners, their roles, the campus that hosted the partnership and the T-EP model. This case description provides the background for understanding the case study findings which are presented thematically in Chapter 5.

4.4 Ensuring quality and credibility

Any respectable research study must be able to demonstrate that it has produced legitimate and worthwhile findings. The concept of ‘trustworthiness’ was coined by Lincoln and Guba as an umbrella principle for a legitimate high quality qualitative study. A study is judged trustworthy if it meets the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, which are analogues to the traditional criteria of internal validity, generalisability, reliability, and objectivity (see Patton 2002: 546 and Babbie and Mouton 2001: 276-277). These criteria are understood as follows:

- Credibility: Does it ring true?
- Transferability: Can the findings be applied in other contexts?
- Dependability: Would the study produce comparable results if repeated with similar respondents or another researcher?
- Conformability: Are the findings supported by evidence and not the result of researcher bias?

Various strategies are used by qualitative researchers to enhance the trustworthiness of their findings including triangulation, field notes, and member checks. Triangulation is, however, the primary approach and involves collecting information through the use of different methods and from different sources (see Patton 2002: 555-560 and Babbie and Mouton 2001: 282).

Triangulation enables researchers to verify the consistency, accuracy and credibility of information gathered through gaining different perspectives on or repeated occurrences of the same issue. Triangulation of data gathered in this study occurred through collecting information from different sources via interviews and document review. Different perspectives were obtained on the same issues from interviewees and documents were used to supplement, clarify, confirm and disconfirm information provided during interviews.

Two strategies that are typically used to support transferability (or generalisation) are thick description and purposeful sampling (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 277). Thick description provides the foundation for drawing similarities between contexts and purposeful sampling ensures that cases that will provide sufficiently rich data are selected. Both these strategies were employed in this thesis.

4.5 Ethical considerations

There were a number of ethical considerations that guided this study, key ones of which were informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. With regard to the first, two initial meetings were held with the College to discuss the research proposal and gain its consent to proceed with the study. The College then informed each of the core partners about the study and solicited their agreement to participate. The College also assisted with the

selection of interviewees and each was informed about the research and consented to their interview.

Confidentiality and anonymity are important ethical principles in social research and participants were promised this. All information provided by interviewees was treated confidentially. Furthermore, while the organisations and individuals in this study are known to each other and will thus recognise themselves and each other in this report, general anonymity has been ensured through not naming the College, its partners, or the individuals who were involved in the partnership and research. A pseudonym has been used for the partnership.

4.6 Limitations of the research

This study has suffered from two main limitations. The first is that time and space constraints meant that only one case could be included in the study. The findings would have been strengthened if they could have been tested with two or more cases. The second limitation relates to the length constraints imposed by a thesis of this nature. The findings and conclusions in good quality qualitative studies are supported by ‘thick’ description. Available space, however, limited the extent to which supporting examples and quotes could be included in the findings.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter described the qualitative case study research strategy employed in this study and its approach to data collection and analysis. It also discussed how the quality and credibility of the findings and conclusions were ensured. The following chapter presents the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The discussion in this chapter aims to build an understanding of the factors that might enable the development of sustainable FET college entrepreneur development partnerships. It covers the period between 1998 and 2004 when the partnership developed and operated and reflects the situation as it was at the end of 2005 by which stage it had ceased to be a partnership and a service-level agreement now governed the relationship between the College and NGO. This chapter refers to the college partner as ‘the College’, the city municipality partner as ‘the Municipality’, and the enterprise development NGO partner as ‘the NGO’. Furthermore, job titles are used for the individuals mentioned in the discussion.

The findings are discussed in the next section and are presented within the framework of factors identified in Chapter 3 that have the most influence on the development of sustainable partnerships. The chapter concludes by summing up the key factors that affected the sustainability of the T-EP Partnership.

5.2 Discussion of findings

Factor 1. An institutional environment that is conducive to the development of sustainable partnerships

Finding 1: Partners were unstable and not in a financially strong enough position to support the development of a strong long-term sustainable partnership.

Institutions provide the environment within which partnerships form and grow. Factors that affect institutional capability to engage in partnerships include restructuring, available funding, staff capacity, government policy and partnership-orientation. While the organisations involved in the T-EP Partnership were weakened by deficits in relation to all these factors, mergers and financial difficulties (which in the case of the College and

Municipality were directly related to government policy) had the most significant impact on the sustainability of the partnership and are thus the focus of the discussion that follows.

Impact of mergers

Both the College and Municipality underwent mergers after the partnership was established. The T-EP Partnership was however most affected by the College's merger as the campus hosting the partnership was incorporated into the College. This had the following main impacts. Firstly, responsibility for the funding and management of the Campus shifted from local government to the PDE. This released the Municipality from financial or management responsibility for the Campus.

Secondly, the Campus was brought under the legislation that now governed FET colleges. The 1998 FET Act had an impact on the Campus's programmes, funding and governance. As a training centre its focus had been ABET skills programmes, but as an FET college-Campus it needed a stronger focus on formal FET programmes to qualify for PDE funding. Furthermore, campus governance became the responsibility of the College's single council and the Campus council was closed. The College also fell under the regulation of the 1999 Public Finances Management Act (PFMA) which required stricter financial controls. As a result, campuses lost control over their funding and this, and the new financial measures being introduced by the College, restricted their operations.

Thirdly, the merger brought about a change in the Campus's management resulting in a period of instability. The Campus Head was moved to the College's central office after managing the Campus for four years and was replaced by a new Campus Manager who managed the Campus for six months.

This created a difficult time in the relationship between the College and NGO which was now operating from the Campus Enterprise Development Unit. Problems that arose during this period were partly due to the financial and operational restrictions placed on the Campus and partly the result of inappropriate management of the Campus's relationship with its partners and the community. The Campus Manager reportedly "went into controlling mode" as she was under pressure to keep costs down and meet College requirements (Provincial Coordinator December 2004: 1). In the end "[Campus] staff were

alienated, the community was alienated, and [the NGO] was alienated” (DCEO Innovation and Development August 2005: 10).

As a way to resolve the problems that had arisen at the Campus, the College asked the NGO to manage the Campus on a temporary basis. The NGO agreed and managed the Campus for nine months until the end of 2004 when a new Campus Manager was appointed.

Fourthly, in the post-merger period College management was preoccupied with restructuring and system development which it had to accomplish under difficult circumstances (see Chapter 2). The result was that it was unable to pay sufficient attention to its partnerships or enterprise development objectives. The CEO noted “If we were a normal college in a normal situation then the partnership with [the NGO] would have worked better” (CEO September 2005: 12).

Financial instability of partners

Both the College and NGO were financially unstable and this was a major factor that led to the breakdown of their relationship. As noted in Chapter 2, the funding model for FET colleges was unsuitable and left them under-funded. The FTE funding system was particularly problematic for entrepreneur development which occurs in small groups and through one-to-one mentoring. The number of entrepreneurs being developed at the Campus did not qualify it for a single PDE post. The CEO noted, “If the department doesn’t give me a post and the student we are serving can’t pay, where does the money come from?” (CEO September 2005: 13).

Whilst the College operated under considerable financial constraints it was nevertheless a government-funded organisation which ensured its continuation. The NGO’s financial sustainability was however more tenuous²⁷. Consequently, the continuation of the NGO’s Provincial Centre depended on it developing a strategy to fund its activities beyond the four-year project grant that had established it. The strategy developed, which failed in the end, is discussed below.

²⁷ See Chapter 3, page 29, where the sustainability difficulties faced by NGOs who service poor constituencies are discussed.

Factor 2. A mutual will to engage in the partnership due to continuing relevance and a satisfactory level of outcomes and benefits

Finding 2: While the partnership initially pursued mutual interests, the will of partners diminished due to changing priorities and/or disappointing outcomes.

Organisations are strongly motivated to engage in partnerships that enable them to achieve strategic goals they would otherwise struggle to achieve. However, partnerships only survive over time if they pursue reciprocal interests and generate valuable outcomes and benefits that are considered mutual. As organisations change so their partnerships need to reflect their new concerns or their motivation to continue with them will diminish.

In this case, all three partners were strongly motivated to engage in the T-EP partnership in the first years of its development as it closely aligned with their aims and strategy²⁸. Importantly it provided each partner with a means to achieve strategic goals that they would not have been able to achieve alone. However, over time, their will to continue engaging in the partnership in the form it was taking declined. The motivations that drove each partner's initial involvement in the partnership and the factors that affected their will to continue with it are discussed below.

The Municipality

The partnership provided the Municipality with a way to manage the Campus, which before college mergers was its responsibility. It also provided an opportunity for it to pursue its social and LED goals and at the same time pilot an approach to LED for unemployed people. In time though, the partnership ceased to be a strategic priority. The Campus became the College and PDE's responsibility and while the Municipality continued to participate in the partnership after the merger, by 2005 it had shifted its attention to other geographic areas that might benefit from a similar intervention. The Municipality had not intended an indefinite involvement in the partnership and had achieved its objective of piloting an LED approach which had been assessed in a study to be replicable if adapted to the unique circumstances in each area (Nel and Gibb 2005: 20-21).

²⁸ See Chapter 2 for an overview of the aims of each organisation.

The College

The Campus and the partnership gave the College an opportunity to extend its reach and more adequately meet its education and training mandate. These also provided an opportunity for the college to pilot its entrepreneur development strategy. As time passed the Campus was incorporated into the College and the new FET system began to take shape. While the College remained committed to entrepreneur development it started to reconsider its goals and strategy in relation to this.

Firstly, it believed that as an FET college at least 70 percent of its effort should be on training for formal employment and that the remainder should be divided between preparation for self-employment and preparation for higher education. Thus although the Campus initially had a strong focus on entrepreneur development, the CEO now felt that not more than 15 percent of its effort should be geared toward this (CEO September 2005: 6).

Secondly, the College was concerned that the Campus had not produced enough entrepreneurs with established businesses to justify its expenditure on entrepreneur development. The CEO noted, “We have got to ask ourselves, ‘Are we successful in developing entrepreneurs’? ... If there are three [successful entrepreneurs] and those three cost us R15 million ... you can’t as a public institution spend public money which is not value-for-money” (CEO September 2005: 6).

Thirdly, the College began to question whether the Campus’s entrepreneur development approach could elevate people beyond survivalist self-employment with a focus on craft skills like pottery. The CEO noted, “I am sometimes very concerned that we are trapping poor people; I know they need bread on the table but how many more people do we still need to stand next to the road selling some or other product they make at home” (CEO September 2005: 7). From the CEO’s perspective, hard-skill technical qualifications like plumber, electrician and motor mechanic, followed by work experience, would provide a better foundation for sustainable ‘enterprise’-type self-employment (CEO September 2005: 7).

Finally, the College felt that unless entrepreneur development was supported by the government's funding norms and standards for FET colleges, they would not be able to effectively engage in this.

Nevertheless, although the College was questioning its approach to and the extent of its focus on entrepreneur development, this remained part of its mandate and it still saw a partnership with an enterprise development organisation as the best way to achieve its goals in this regard. It was thus open to the 2005 service-level agreement it had with the NGO evolving into a new partnership.

The NGO

The NGO saw the partnership as a way to achieve its job creation and entrepreneur development vision. This also became central to the NGO Provincial Centre's sustainability strategy. In this regard, the NGO decided that the best option for the centre's long-term sustainability would be for it to partner with provincial colleges and assist them to provide entrepreneur development services. This strategy appeared to be a sound one. It was expected that colleges would have access to funding for entrepreneur development given government's strong policy commitment to this. Furthermore as entrepreneur development was not a core competence for colleges it was assumed that they would draw on external expertise to accomplish this. The NGO's college capacity-building project had also enabled it to obtain the backing of the PDE and forge relationships with colleges. Moreover, by 2000 the NGO had established a partnership with the case study college with which it was piloting the first of what was expected to be a number of campus-based enterprise development units that would be managed by the NGO for the College.

While the partnership initially developed in a way that met the NGO's goals, a number of factors changed this, which undermined its will to continue with it. Firstly, the NGO was opposed to the College transforming the Campus into an FET college-campus. From the NGO's perspective the Campus needed to remain a community-oriented training centre as local communities would be unable to sustain a traditional FET college-campus due to the poverty in the area and low education levels. The lack of local formal employment opportunities also made the NGO believe that the greatest need was for training that would facilitate job creation and enterprise development rather than training for formal employment.

Secondly, the government had failed to adequately fund the entrepreneur development mandate of FET colleges and as a result the College did not have sufficient means to finance its entrepreneur development activities at the case study campus or establish enterprise development units at its other campuses. As such the demand for the NGO's services from the College and other colleges was less than what was needed to sustain it.

Finally, the partnership did not produce the benefits the NGO had expected. It also felt that the benefits generated were skewed in favour of the College. While the partnership generated a range of benefits for both parties including service delivery, market, partnership and funding opportunities, the NGO felt that it did not benefit as much as the College financially or in terms of its own development as an organisation. In essence the NGO had expected that the College would invest half the funds raised for the T-EP in entrepreneur development but this did not happen²⁹. Ultimately, the NGO felt that the College developed the technical training and job placement side of the T-EP (which the College was responsible for) to the detriment of the entrepreneur development side (which the NGO was responsible for)³⁰. The issue of how funds raised for the T-EP were shared between the College and NGO relates in part to the different understandings, visions and strategies that the partners had for the Campus and their partnership, which is discussed below.

Over time the NGO thus began to question whether the partnership was or would ever deliver the outcomes and benefits it had anticipated. It decided that it either had to turn its partnership with the College around or change its Provincial Centre's direction and sustainability strategy. When the NGO agreed to manage the Campus it saw this as an

²⁹ Funds were raised for the T-EP by the College and while the NGO contributed to the development of funding proposals it was understood that the College would decide how the money would be spent. Informally it was agreed that the College would pay the NGO for its contribution at the Campus through a fee-for-services arrangement. The NGO did not put in competing proposals with the College as it felt it would be more strategic for the two to collaborate on raising funds for their combined activities. In time it tried to raise funds for a different project from the Municipality and its proposal was turned down on the basis that it was already being funded by the Municipality through the College. The NGO became concerned that through putting in proposals with the College it was cutting itself off from funding opportunities.

³⁰ The College noted that while it received more of the funding raised for the T-EP, the NGO was paid for all the services it officially rendered. However, in a partnership, partners often put in time that is not paid for. In this sense, according to the College, the NGO put unfunded effort into the Campus but so did the College. From the DCEO Innovation and Development's perspective the partnership generated considerable benefits for all partners that "are still continuing" (DCEO Innovation and Development August 2005: 2). She noted, "We both gained incredibly from what we did together. But [the NGO] is not so keen to recognise this. They feel let down by the College" (DCEO Innovation and Development August 2005: 9).

opportunity to salvage its partnership with the College and its sustainability strategy through reinvigorating the Campus as an entrepreneur development centre. While managing the Campus, the NGO prepared a Campus programme and sustainability strategy that focused on entrepreneur development and presented this to the College. The College, however, rejected this proposal as it saw the Campus's sustainability as being tied to it operating as an FET college-campus.

This signalled the end of the NGO's vision for the Campus and of the sustainability strategy it had been pursuing and a change in the nature of its relationship with the College from partner to service-provider. The NGO was, however, keen for its relationship with the College to grow into a new partnership that would make entrepreneur delivery a feature of all its campuses.

Factor 3. A shared vision and strategy for the partnership that aligns with each partner's goals and strategy

Finding 3: Partners initially shared the same broad vision for the partnership but they failed to detail this and over time their visions for it began to diverge as their priorities changed.

While a sustainable partnership is one that evolves, it is essential that partners develop and maintain a shared vision and strategy for the partnership throughout its life. The broad vision which partners shared for the T-EP Partnership was that it would provide training and support that would lead to employment or self-employment and thereby facilitate social and economic development. They also shared a broad understanding of the role each would play to accomplish this. However, as the partnership developed, the group failed to detail their vision for it or to clarify each partner's role and status. Given that the partners approached their collective effort from different perspectives and with different interests, they tended to have different understandings of the exact nature of the partnership and their roles.

The Municipality was broadly concerned with facilitating social and economic development in local communities through job creation and enterprise development and

the Campus and the partnership was a means to achieve this. The NGO saw the Campus operating as a community training centre that would focus on developing micro-entrepreneurs who would then employ others and thereby create jobs.

The College's vision for the Campus was that it should provide education and training that could lead to higher education, formal employment or self-employment. While the College had supported the Campus's operation as a community training centre with an entrepreneur development-orientation, it intended to transform it into an FET college-campus after its merger (CEO September 2005: 6). The College was however initially not sure what the Campus would look like as the FET system was still taking shape and issues around programmes, funding and the extent to which colleges would focus on training for formal versus self-employment had yet to be resolved.

Initially, the broad vision that partners shared kept their partnership together and moving in the same direction. However, as the partnership unfolded and partners asserted their interests in relation to it, they began to differ on various issues. Importantly they differed on whether the partnership operated at the level of the Campus or T-EP and on the extent of the focus on entrepreneur development as opposed to training and support for formal employment. Part of the problem was that there was a confusion between the T-EP and the Campus as the former was understood to be the training delivery strategy of the latter. As such the T-EP included all Campus programmes and its entrepreneur development and job placement activities.

The issues that partners differed on ultimately concerned (i) the NGO's role and rights in relation to the Campus, and (ii) the way funds raised for the T-EP were divided between the College and NGO (discussed above). The NGO and Municipality understood the partnership 'project' as being the Campus and the T-EP as the vehicle for achieving the Campus's goals. While the management and infrastructure arrangement between the Municipality and College clearly made their partnership one that operated at the level of the Campus, the NGO's position in relation to the Campus was less clear.

Although it had no formal jurisdiction over the Campus, the NGO nevertheless understood that it was in a three-way equal partnership that operated at the level of the Campus and that entrepreneur development, which it was responsible for, constituted at least half of the

Campus's activity. This, NGO respondents noted, was the impression the College gave it and the impression they collectively gave to the outside world. The NGO's Provincial and EDU Coordinators³¹ noted, "The whole idea of the centre running as a partnership-driven programme was very strong" (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 2).

The College however understood its partnership with the NGO to have been concerned with entrepreneur development, which from its perspective constituted considerably less than half of the Campus's focus. The DCEO Innovation and Development commented, "[The NGO] saw their role as huge but we saw it as one aspect of our campus" (DCEO Innovation and Development September 2005: 1).

As time passed the Municipality took more of a back seat in the partnership and the College and NGO led its development. However as the College had legal authority over the Campus, it was in a stronger position to influence how things unfolded at the Campus which in turn affected the way the partnership developed and the direction it took. The NGO was unhappy about the Campus's merger with the College and its transformation into a FET college-campus. It also felt that it should have been consulted on this as should the communities that had been part of its establishment. Ultimately, the NGO saw the change in status and direction of the Campus as an abandonment of the job creation and entrepreneur development vision partners had originally shared for their partnership (Provincial Coordinator December 2004: 1).

Factor 4. Sufficient alignment between partner institutions

Finding 4: The College's culture and systems were not conducive to enterprise development and this led to a clash at this level between the College and NGO.

Long-lasting partnerships tend to have a good fit between partners' goals, size, capacity, culture and ways of working, and where differences exist these are acknowledged and managed. There was poor alignment between the culture and systems of the College and

³¹ The NGO's Provincial Coordinator and Enterprise Development Unit (EDU) Coordinator were interviewed together in one of the interviews conducted and quotes from this interview are referenced as 'Provincial and EDU Coordinators'.

NGO, and an incompatibility between the way the College operated and entrepreneur development processes that set up tension in the partnership.

The NGO was a small organisation that was established to support entrepreneur development and operated accordingly. The College on the other hand was a large government institution for which entrepreneur development was a non-core activity. The College also had to comply with FET legislation and PFMA requirements. The PFMA is geared toward ensuring that public money is effectively and accountably managed and does not allow much flexibility in this regard. The process of establishing new systems after the merger, and the systems developed, were unfortunately not conducive to developing entrepreneurs.

In general, businesses need to be able to operate with quick turn-around times. This means that they need to be able to produce invoices and receipts immediately and deliver products ordered on time even if they have to work after hours. Organisations that are engaged in enterprise development need systems that support this. In addition, if they house the developing enterprises they need to be able to accommodate the flexible working hours these enterprises may need to keep.

These criteria were not met by the college, and the NGO found the College's systems and procedures "very inhibiting for enterprise development ... You cannot tell us to put in an order form and then give us an invoice in a week's time. A business needs to operate speedily" (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 20). There was also the problem that while entrepreneurs operating from the Campus needed to work business hours and sometimes operate at night or on the weekends, the Campus was only open from 8 to 3 o'clock during weekdays and closed over weekends and during college holidays.

While the CEO appreciated the concerns and the frustrations which the College's systems caused, he noted that the NGO did not try to understand the position the College was in or the laws that regulated it. He noted "I am restricted by the PFMA. If there are limitations placed on the partner, people must understand that. I can't just make a payment ... if there are no [supporting] documents" (CEO September 2005: 16). From the NGO's perspective, if FET colleges planned to engage in entrepreneur development they needed to break the rules or establish different systems for this.

Factor 5. Resources that enable partnership continuation

Finding 5: The sustainability of the T-EP was dependent on continuous fundraising which put the partnership and those involved in it under considerable strain.

A major factor in the sustainability of partnerships over time is continuing resources. In this case, none of the three partners were in a position to financially sustain the Campus as a community training centre in the long-term. The financial constraints under which the College and NGO operated have already been noted and although the Municipality provided some funding for the Campus in the first few years of its operation, because education and training was not formally part of its mandate it could not fund it on an ongoing basis.

Furthermore, the Campus's target market could not sustain it and to enable them to benefit from the services provided, these were heavily subsidised. From the outset, therefore, the functioning of the Campus and the delivery of the T-EP thus depended on fundraising. Funds had to be raised for programmes, infrastructure (like business hives) and operations. There was however never enough money and the pressure to find funding was ceaseless. Short-term funding cycles and funding shortages also made long-term planning difficult. The DCEO Innovation and Development noted, "If you don't have three years' funding up front, a lot of energy goes into chasing after it" (September 2005: 2).

Solving the problem of how to fund the Campus's community/entrepreneur development agenda was difficult though. Local residents would never have the means to pay the full value of the services provided and as long as the Campus provided services that were not funded under the norms and standards for FET colleges, funds would have to be raised through alternative means. Once the Campus was incorporated into the College, its sustainability ultimately became the College's problem. For the College the only solution was for it to operate as a proper FET college-campus thereby enabling it to qualify for PDE funding.

Factor 6. Formalisation of the partnership agreement

Finding 6: The partnership operated on the basis of informal arrangements which worked well until relationship problems developed between the College and NGO.

While early partnership development tends to benefit from looser arrangements which allow space to test relationships, a formalised agreement can stabilise an established partnership and facilitate its continuation. In this case, the T-EP Partnership began and operated as an informal venture on the basis of informal agreements made by participating individuals. In the establishment phase this worked well as the relationships between those involved were good and it gave them the flexibility to trial and develop the project together without constraints. From the Economic Development Manager's perspective the partnership would never have got off the ground if they had tried to define their roles exactly. He noted, "You overlap as a group to get the thing off the ground and only later on are you at a stage where you can formalise the arrangement" (Economic Development Manager September 2005: 8).

The partnership was, however, never formalised and this became a problem when difficulties started developing between the College and NGO. As there was no formal record of the agreements made, this could not be referred to in resolving these³². Furthermore as the informal agreements had been made between individuals it was not always clear whether these extended beyond them to their organisations. There were two main areas in which these unclear agreements fuelled problems: (i) the precise nature and scope of the partnership and partner roles; and (ii) the way money raised in the name of the T-EP would be divided between the NGO and College.

In the end, all the partners felt that the lack of a formal partnership agreement was a problem. Over the years, the college and NGO intended to formalise their relationship and developed a number of draft partnership agreements but never signed any of these³³. The

³² The partnership not only did not have a formal partnership agreement, but as agreements were informally made, these were also not recorded in meeting minutes.

³³ In 2003 the College and NGO put in a joint proposal to the DoL to establish an Employment Skills Development Agency (ESDA). The DoL was establishing ESDAs at this time to facilitate learnership delivery. To support their proposal the College and NGO registered a Section 21 Company and drew up a joint venture agreement to govern their combined management of the ESDA. They however failed to win the

CEO noted that while the College wanted to formalise its relationship with the NGO, it lacked the capacity to do so as it was focused on merging (CEO September 2005: 11).

Factor 7. A healthy partnership ‘relationship’

There are three findings under this factor that are discussed separately all of which focus on the relationship between the NGO and college. The first concerns issues that led to the breakdown in the relationship between the College and NGO, the second, the consequence of the power differential between them, and the third relates to boundary problems that occurred.

Finding 7: Trust broke down between the individuals central to the partnership which was not sufficiently institutionalised to overcome this.

The sustainability of a partnership depends on the development and maintenance of healthy relationships between the individuals involved and the organisations they represent. Healthy relationships are characterised by trust, respect, accountability and substantive equality. In practice, many partnerships remain at the level of the people involved and if problems develop in their relationships, this can threaten the survival of the partnership. This is what happened in the T-EP Partnership. The partnership between the College and the NGO largely remained at the level of the College’s DCEO Innovation and Development and the NGO’s Provincial Coordinator. In time though, their relationship began to fail and the partnership was not sufficiently institutionalised to survive this.

Because of their close collaboration on the development and implementation of the T-EP, the DCEO Innovation and Development and Provincial Coordinator’s personal relationship formed its core. Initially, it was a very strong relationship that was built on trust, respect and friendship based on their shared experience of developing the T-EP. Over time however various factors led to their relationship and ultimately the trust and confidence they had built in each other deteriorating. When this happened “the partnership started to disintegrate” (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 17).

tender and the company they established only ever existed in name. Furthermore they never signed the joint venture agreement developed.

Factors contributing to this included the Campus's merger with the College; the management of the Campus after the DCEO Innovation and Development was transferred to the College's central office; the general financial constraints under which the College and NGO operated and the constant pressure to raise funds for Campus/T-EP activities; the NGO beginning to feel that it was not being adequately compensated for the role it was playing at the Campus and that financial benefits were being skewed in the College's favour; and the NGO feeling that the College was claiming most of the credit for the success of the Campus and not sufficiently acknowledging the role it had played in this.

The financial pressure that both the DCEO Innovation and Development and Provincial Coordinator operated under was a key factor. The Provincial Coordinator was increasingly under pressure from her directors to justify the time and effort being invested in the partnership, which seemed not to be building the sustainability of the NGO's Provincial Centre. This was no doubt a significant factor that led her to re-examine her relationship with the DCEO Innovation and Development and the NGO's relationship with the College.

A major problem in the College and NGO's partnership was that their 'relationship difficulties' remained at too personal a level and were not dealt with at an organisational level until the partnership was in jeopardy.

Finding 8, which follows, focuses on the power difference between the College and NGO.

Finding 8: The College had more power in the relationship than the NGO and over time the NGO began to feel exploited by it.

Because the College had legal authority over the Campus and was a government organisation that was larger and more influential than the NGO, this put it in a more powerful position in their relationship. The NGO started to feel the College did not respect it and was taking advantage of it because it was 'just a little NGO' (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 17). Whether the NGO was exploited by the College or not, it believed it was, and this was not conducive to a healthy relationship. Although there were

clearly power differences between partners these were not openly acknowledged or addressed and this undermined the trust between them.

Problems of boundary-blurring between the College and NGO are discussed in the next finding.

Finding 9: The boundary between the College and NGO was not adequately demarcated and managed and this compromised their relationship.

While sustainable partnerships rely on a level of interdependency between partners, they also need to recognise in which areas they overlap and in which areas they remain separate, and respect each other's turf. Here, the boundary between the College and NGO became blurred and they started to invade each other's turf which caused problems. For instance:

- The NGO felt that the College did not respect its intellectual property and used its ideas and the achievements of the entrepreneurs at the Campus to promote itself without proper acknowledgement
- The College believed that the NGO expected to be more involved in the affairs of the Campus and College's broader dealings with the Municipality than their partnership warranted
- The NGO and College's roles in the T-EP overlapped in its production unit component³⁴ and each began to encroach on the other's area of expertise which caused tensions and resulted in the NGO finally refusing to participate in this
- The most blatant example of boundary burring was the NGO's management of the Campus³⁵. This constituted a conflict of interest for the NGO as it set up dual roles and accountability

Factor 8. Strong supportive leadership and effective management and communication

There are two findings for this factor, one of which focuses on the leadership aspect and the other, the management.

³⁴ See Chapter 2 for an overview of the T-EP model and the production unit's place of this.

³⁵ The NGO's management of the Campus is discussed in Finding 1.

Finding 10: The initial development and success of the partnership was facilitated by strong leadership but over time its leadership weakened and failed to keep the partnership going forward in the same direction and to steer it through the challenges it was facing.

Leadership is a key determinant in partnership success and longevity and this played a central role in the development and initial success of the Campus/T-EP as well as in its eventual decline. The T-EP Partnership was led by an individual from each partner organisation, the DCEO Innovation and Development (College), Economic Development Manager (Municipality) and the Provincial Coordinator (NGO). All three were dynamic and charismatic leaders who were deeply committed to the goals of the Campus/T-EP and put considerable effort into it getting it going and enabled its initial success.

The Economic Development Manager played a strong supportive role while the DCEO Innovation and Development and the Provincial Coordinator led developments in relation to the design and implementation of the T-EP. While all three were vital to the development of the Campus/T-EP, the DCEO Innovation and Development was most influential as she was not only the head of the Campus hosting the partnership but initially served as the main link between the other two partners.

Although many challenges had to be overcome, the T-EP initially flourished under the combined daily leadership of the DCEO Innovation and Development and Provincial Coordinator who were supported by a growing and committed team of staff at the Campus. However, as the College's merger progressed it began to impact on the Campus's management and direction and thus on the T-EP Partnership and tensions started to develop between the College and NGO. A turning point was the move of the DCEO Innovation and Development to the College's central office. This ended a four-year period in which she, as Campus Head, had provided hands-on leadership and management at the Campus and in the partnership.

Problems that arose at the Campus after the new Campus Manager took over have been noted above³⁶. These problems were in part the result of the Campus Manager not sufficiently understanding or buying into the Campus's community and partnership outlook (DCEO Innovation and Development August 2005: 10). This situation was not helped by the poor transition that took place between her and the outgoing Campus Head³⁷.

The new Campus Manager was thus not in a position to take on the role that the DCEO Innovation and Development had played in the partnership when she was Campus Head. While the DCEO Innovation and Development continued to engage in the partnership, her new role removed her from the day-to-day affairs of Campus and the partnership. Furthermore after the College's merger, the Municipality's Economic Development Manager also began to play a less and less active role in the Campus and partnership.

At the end of the day, for various reasons many of which were outside of their control, the partnership's leaders at both partnership and institutional level did not successfully lead it through the challenges it began facing after the College's merger. They also failed to ensure its continuing relevance and, most importantly, to establish it at an institutional level which would have helped to facilitate its continuation beyond the three individuals who had initially driven it.

A discussion of Finding 11, which focuses on management and communication in the T-EP Partnership, follows.

³⁶ See Finding 1.

³⁷ Chapter 2 gives an overview of the College and describes the difficulties it faced in the post-merger period. It also looks at the college's approach to partnerships before and after the merger. The constraints that the college operated under (a key one of which was understaffing) and the lack of dedicated focus on partnerships, meant that the DCEO Innovation and Development's involvement in the T-EP Partnership before and after the merger depended on her putting in a considerable amount of personal time. The delays in senior management appointments (also noted in Chapter 2) meant that the college was unable to permanently appoint staff and both the DCEO Innovation and Development's and new Campus Manager were in acting positions. Although the new Campus Manager was a staff member who had been based at the Campus, she struggled in her new role and the pressure which other senior college staff were working under meant that she was not adequately oriented to or supported in her new role.

Finding 11. No structure or system was established to manage the partnership and its work and to thus ensure effective accountable communication and management.

The development and continuation of partnerships depend on effective management and communication which is facilitated by formalised management structures. A T-EP Partnership management structure was, however, not established and communication between the three key role players took place telephonically, through emails and occasional informal meetings. As the link between the Economic Development Manager and the Provincial Coordinator, the DCEO Innovation and Development was at the centre of the process. It was a process that often involved the DCEO Innovation and Development and the Provincial Coordinator discussing issues and the DCEO Innovation and Development then discussing the same issues with the Economic Development Manager or vice versa.

The NGO occupied an office at the Campus from 2000 and then moved its operation to the Campus in 2001. This close proximity ensured that the College and the Provincial Coordinator were in daily contact.

The informal management and communication arrangement was effective in that it fitted into the three individuals busy schedules and enabled decisions to be made and work to proceed. In retrospect, partners felt that they should have established a steering committee to manage the partnership. This “management oversight” (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 11) seems to have occurred because in the early years of the partnership there was no pressing need to establish a committee as partners were in regular communication and the work got done. The Provincial Coordinator noted that it was a “developmental model where for four years your contact is so close on a daily and weekly basis whereas in another partnership you would need to touch base at least once a month because you are operating so separately” (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 11).

However, as the partnership started to experience problems the need for a formal management structure became evident. From the NGO’s perspective the lack of structure and the DCEO Innovation and Development centrality in the management and

communication process meant that the “the power was in one person’s hands” (Provincial and EDU Coordinators August 2005: 11). This became a problem when the DCEO Innovation and Development and Provincial Coordinator’s relationship started deteriorating.

Factor 9. Community support gained and retained

Finding 12: Community support for the Campus declined which contributed to the deterioration in the partnership between the College and NGO.

The success and continuation of partnerships that focus on community development depends on their obtaining and maintaining the goodwill of community stakeholders and beneficiaries. In this case, community involvement in and support for the Campus in the early years of its existence was considered to be one of its major strengths (Economic Development Manager 2005: 8, and Nel and Gibbs 2005: 99-100). However, over time as the Campus shifted from being a training centre to a FET college-campus it became more and more removed from local communities and started to lose some of the goodwill and support it had previously experienced.

Tensions started developing with the community as the Campus became a less accessible resource and some community members began to view it as a competitor for local resources (Provincial Coordinator December 2004: 2). One problem was that there was an increase in security at the gate which made the Campus harder to access. There were also a few incidents that occurred that served to damage the Campus’s relationship with community members³⁸.

The decline in community support for the Campus was a factor that contributed to the deterioration of the partnership between the College and NGO. As a community development organisation, the NGO’s success and survival depended on it maintaining a

³⁸ A major problem that occurred was that in an attempt to keep Campus costs down community members working in the clothing unit were required by the new Campus Manager to pay to use the Campus’s facilities during the College’s 2003 December break. This was something they had previously not been asked to do and they were extremely unhappy about it. The result was that the clothing unit closed down as community members refused to ever use it again.

good relationship with the communities it serviced. When problems started developing in the Campus's relationship with local communities, the NGO began to feel the need to distance itself from the College's actions as a way to protect its position with the community.

Factor 10. Partnership learning, adaptability and evolution

Finding 13: As a collective, partners did not take a learning and evolutionary approach to the partnership. They failed to review or evaluate it and did not adapt it to meet their changing circumstances and needs.

Evolution based on reflection and learning is a key factor in the continuation of a partnership. Partnerships need to be able to adapt to accommodate lessons learned and partners' changing situations and needs. The T-EP Partnership outgrew its original purpose and partners failed to recognise this or accept that circumstances, needs and priorities had changed and that the partnership needed to change too.

One of the biggest failings of the partnership was that its partners did not as a group review or evaluate their partnership 'relationship' or the T-EP. While there was some degree of reflection on the partnership and learning by individual partners, this never occurred at the level of the partnership. As such, as a group, they could not use their collective assessments and learning to adapt the partnership in a way that it remained relevant to their different and changing requirements.

Such evaluation of the T-EP that did take place was at an informal level as the model was developed on the basis of trial and error. The focus of the learning however was the design and implementation of the T-EP and little attention was paid to the partnership itself. In this regard, the DCEO Innovation and Development noted that the College's partnership with the NGO "slowly eroded over time and we haven't stopped every year to review and say, 'Ok what is good, what is bad, how can we do it differently, how can we make it better?'" (DCEO Innovation and Development March 2005: 2).

The experience of the T-EP Partnership made its partners realise that the survival of a partnership depends on its adaptability. The Economic Development Manager noted that partnerships need to “recognise things may change over time. Like the FET Act has changed. This doesn’t negate the reason for a partnership. It is not cast in stone forever. There is a chance to change. If it is cast in stone then it probably won’t survive” (Economic Development Manager August 2005: 14).

In retrospect, partners also realised the importance of reflection and evaluation in partnership development and continuation. They stressed the need to define partnership outcomes at the outset and establish formal measures of success; something they did not do for the T-EP Partnership. The CEO noted that partnerships not only need to evaluate whether they are achieving their outcomes, but they need to determine that “the reason for establishing the partnership is still going” (CEO September 2005: 14). This realisation was however too late to save the partnership.

Factor 11. Institutionalisation

Finding 14: The lack of institutionalisation of the partnership compromised its long-term sustainability.

The literature indicates that an institutionalised partnership has specific features. It is part of organisational strategy and is supported by organisational structures and systems. Importantly the relationship exists between the organisations rather than the individuals involved and key individual role players from each organisation have ‘seconds’ who can back them up or replace them if necessary. In addition other employees know about the partnership, its value to the organisation and how to work with it.

Of these features, the T-EP Partnership only appears to have been characterised by the first in that it was part of the strategy of each organisation, at least for the first few years. The findings already presented show that none of the other features that distinguish an institutionalised partnership were evident. A key failing was that the relationship largely remained at the level of the individuals involved and when problems developed between

them, it was insufficiently institutionalised to overcome these³⁹. While the partnership would not have got off the ground, achieved the successes it did, or survived as long as it did without the hard work and dedication of the three individuals that drove it, to continue beyond them and survive in the long-term it needed to be an institutionalised part of each organisation.

The CEO noted that the College tried to put its partnership with the NGO “in the system” through bringing it in under its partnerships portfolio and attempting to develop a joint venture agreement with it (CEO August 2005: 10). The College’s partnership portfolio was however inadequately established as it did not have funds to appoint a partnership manager and partnership systems had yet to be developed. As the role of partnership manager was, in the interim, being handled by the DCEO Innovation and Development, this made it difficult to shift the partnership from individual to college-level. The CEO noted that while the NGO tried to work through the College’s system, “Our system was too much a one-person show” (CEO August 2005:11).

5.3 Conclusion

The sustainability of the T-EP Partnership was clearly affected by all eleven factors identified as key to the development of sustainable partnerships. With regard to order of importance, the findings correlate with the literature review in terms of primary and secondary factors⁴⁰. Of the primary factors, however, a number stand out as having been more influential than others. Factor 2 (mutual will to engage in the partnership), Factor 3 (shared vision) and Factor 10 (learning and evolution) all played a key but interrelated role in the partnership’s demise.

The partnership as a collective failed over time to develop and maintain a common vision and each partner’s agenda for it began to diverge (Factor 3). As a result instead of moving forward in the same direction they tried to steer it in different directions. In relation to Factor 2, partners’ changing priorities and the partnership’s failure to deliver expected outcomes reduced their will to continue with it, at least in the form it was taking. Importantly, the partnership failed to adequately recognise and align with each partner’s

³⁹ This issue is discussed in Finding 7.

⁴⁰ See Table 1 on page 47 of the literature review.

changing situations and concerns. Factor 10 is relevant in this regard. Partnerships only survive in the long-term if they are able to learn and change and thereby maintain their relevance.

Partnerships are however put into practice by people who have resources to back them. Factor 8 (leadership and management), Factor 1 (conducive institutional environment) and Factor 5 (resource continuation) are important in this regard. The discussion above has pointed out the weaknesses in relation to these three factors. The partnership was also heavily dependent on individuals and not sufficiently institutionalised to overcome the problems developing between them (Factors 7 and 11).

In some senses the failure of the partnership, however, was a leadership failure. While its establishment and early development was facilitated by a strong leader from each partner, the College's merger and the change in the Municipality's priorities weakened their leadership input in the maintenance and continuation phase of the partnership. The partnership needed strong collective leadership at this stage to steer it forward through its difficulties and to enable its continuing relevance.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this thesis is to build an understanding of the main factors that might enable the development of sustainable FET college partnerships with an entrepreneur development focus. This was done through a review of pertinent literature and a case study on the T-EP Partnership. The conclusion consolidates the findings from the case study and literature on factors that enable the sustainability of these kinds of partnerships. While the focus is on entrepreneur development-type partnerships, many of the factors are considered relevant to a broader range of FET college partnerships. Drawing on the literature and case study, the conclusion also provides an overview of the main characteristics of an ideal-type sustainable partnership and presents key lessons on how to establish and maintain sustainable partnerships. In doing so it meets its two secondary aims⁴¹.

The conclusion begins with a characterisation of a sustainable partnership and then sums up the discussion on factors that influence partnership sustainability. Thereafter, a few key lessons are provided on establishing and maintaining sustainable partnerships. The main challenges that FET colleges face sustaining partnerships are then noted and this is followed by a brief discussion on the issue of how to assess sustainability in relation to partnerships.

6.2 Characteristics of an ‘ideal-type’ sustainable partnership

The literature and case study show that a sustainable partnership displays particular characteristics. It is a mature partnership that is built on a solid foundation of strong personal and organisational relationships, a common vision and approach, careful planning, effective leadership and management, accountable practice, and successful achievements. It is a partnership that evaluates its activities and relationships and is able to learn from the past, deal with problems, change and evolve and take on new projects. It is a partnership that generates benefits for partners that are sufficiently valuable and justify

⁴¹ The aims of this thesis can be found Chapter 1 on page 1.

their continued involvement. It is a partnership that all partners are equally committed to and take ownership of.

Furthermore, it is an institutionalised partnership. This means that it forms part of the vision and strategy of the organisations involved and that institutional structures and systems have been established that enable the partnership's work. Importantly, the relationship exists at the level of each partner organisation and thus extends beyond the individuals who represent partners in the partnership. In addition, key individuals in the partnership have 'seconds' who can back them up or replace them if necessary.

Finally, it is a partnership that is able to sustain itself through a combination of resource commitments (financial, human and other) made by partner organisations and the generation of income through fees-for-services and fundraising. This is especially important in the context of FET college entrepreneur development as beneficiaries not only need to be supported over an extended period, they also lack the means to cover the actual cost of their training and support.

In the light of this characterisation of a sustainable partnership, the following section sums up the discussion on factors found to be most likely to enable FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships to achieve sustainability.

6.3 Factors that enable sustainable partnerships

Eleven interrelated factors were found in this study to primarily influence the development of sustainable FET college entrepreneur development-type partnerships. While all factors are important, some are more fundamental than others. The table below lists the factors and indicates their primacy.

Table 3. Factors that enable partnership sustainability

| FACTORS | Level of importance |
|--|----------------------------|
| Factor 1: An institutional environment that is conducive to the development of sustainable partnerships | Primary |
| Factor 2: A mutual will to engage in the partnership due to continuing relevance and satisfactory level of outcomes and benefits | Primary |
| Factor 3: A shared vision and strategy for the partnership that aligns with each partner's goals and strategy | Primary |
| Factor 4: Sufficient alignment between partner institutions | Secondary |
| Factor 5: Resources that enable partnership development and continuation | Primary |
| Factor 6: Formalisation of the partnership agreement | Secondary |
| Factor 7: A healthy partnership 'relationship' | Primary |
| Factor 8: Strong supportive leadership and effective management and communication | Primary |
| Factor 9: Community support gained and retained | Secondary |
| Factor 10: Partnership learning, adaptability and evolution | Primary |
| Factor 11: Institutionalisation | Primary |

Of these factors, there is no doubt that 'will' (Factor 2) drives partnership establishment and continuation. What keeps 'will' strong is (i) the relevance of the partnership to the vision and strategy of an organisation, (ii) the extent of and perceived value of the outcomes and benefits delivered and the degree to which these match partner expectations and are considered mutual, (iii) a continuing demand for the partnership's services (facilitated by Factor 9), and (iv) the incorporation of the partnership's work, lessons and achievements into the life of the organisation.

Will on its own is however insufficient to sustain a partnership. Without the 'means' to do this, an organisation will not succeed. 'Means' is understood as constituting a vision and strategy for the partnership (Factor 3) and resources in the form of people, who will lead it and carry out its work, as well as financial resources to fund its activities (Factors 1, 5 and 8). Furthermore, effective partnerships that continue over time are evolutionary and go through cycles of implementation, reflection, learning and renewal (Factor 10). Good leadership, management and communication play a central role in this process (Factor 8). Additionally, healthy relationships (Factor 7) are at the heart of effective long-term partnerships and a focus is thus needed on developing and maintaining the 'relationship' element of partnership. Finally, sustainable partnerships are facilitated by

formalised agreements (Factor 6) and their continuation beyond the individuals that established them is ensured through their institutionalisation (Factor 11).

Lessons that have emerged from this study on how to develop partnerships, which have the potential for sustainability, are outlined in the next section.

6.4 Key lessons on establishing and maintaining sustainable partnerships

Partnerships are considered to be the most complex form of inter-organisational relationship. They develop over time and various factors influence their success and sustainability. Strong healthy partnerships that are sustainable do not arise by accident but are the outcome of a considered and effective collaborative process that is based on good leadership and careful management. Furthermore, they are firmly rooted in and central to the cause of the organisations that have given birth to them. Various lessons arise from the literature and case study on how to build partnerships that have the capacity for sustainability.

While the focus and scope of this thesis does not allow a full exposition of these lessons, a few key points are presented. As some are pertinent to partnerships in the early stages of existence and others to more developed partnerships, lessons are presented in terms of two broad partnership phases:

- The establishment and development phase, which is seen as the period when a partnership is set up and starts operating
- The maintenance phase, which is concerned with the continuing development and maintenance of an established partnership and its function

Establishing and developing sustainable partnerships

Partner choice

Partnership success and sustainability depends on there being a good match between partners in the sense that they have complementary resources and expertise and that there

is adequate alignment between them with regard to vision and culture. This points to a need for more conscious partner choice when establishing partnerships.

A trial period

A trial period is seen as a good way to determine whether partners are sufficiently complimentary, able to work together, and thus whether the partnership is viable. A looser arrangement between partners during this period is recommended to enable flexible operation while the partnership is taking shape and to ensure that time is not wasted formalising a partnership that may not develop.

Build education partnerships on the basis of service delivery relationships

A service delivery arrangement is seen as providing an opportunity for organisations to get to know each other and start building relationships. Through the process of working together they will be able to determine whether they would be more effective if they worked in partnership and if there is sufficient alignment between them for a partnership to succeed. As such, a service delivery arrangement could constitute a partnership trial period.

Plan partnerships as three-year renewable projects

It is recommended that partnerships are planned as three-year renewable projects with the trial period forming the first six-months to year of the project. The partnership should then aim for sustainability at least for the length of each project cycle. This will enable a longer-term perspective, save energy that would go into constant fundraising, and provide the foundations for continuity.

Adopt a phased or project-process approach to planning, implementation and management

A phased approach, which allows time to incrementally build trust and test working together, is considered best. Projects can either be planned as whole projects or broken into phases. A project-process approach is recommended for partnerships as this provides a

structured approach to planning and implementation that has at its foundation reflection and learning⁴².

Review, evaluation, learning and change

Regular review and evaluation is needed which includes a focus on the partnership's activities, relationship and sustainability. Evaluation should be built in to coincide with the end of each phase of the project and at the project's end. It is essential that partner commitment to the partnership is secured as it progresses. Project reviews provide a good opportunity to do this. Measures need to be developed for determining success, sustainability and impact.

Formalising partnership arrangements

While early partnership development tends to benefit from looser arrangements which allow space to test relationships, a formalised agreement can stabilise an established partnership and facilitate its continuation. It is thus suggested that an agreement of some form be signed after a trial/pilot-phase if this proves successful. Among other things, agreements need to specify how money raised for the project will be divided between partners.

Leadership and management

The success and longevity of a partnership ultimately depends on its leadership and management which need to be continuous and appropriate. Management structures with in-built flexibility and accountability mechanisms are recommended and should be

⁴² Process projects have four main loops (experimental, pilot, demonstration, production) and have a feedback loop back to the beginning after each loop (Bell and Morse 2000: 108). The table below illustrates the main difference between the traditional and adaptive project approaches.

| Traditional, blueprint projects | Process, adaptive projects |
|---|---|
| Inputs and activities are specified at outset | Inputs and activities are only partially specified at the outset, generally only for the initial phase of project |
| Implementation is according to plans established during formulation process | Implementation is subject to continual re-planning on the basis of formative evaluation |
| Stages of project cycle are distinct | Formulation and evaluation are incorporated into implementation stage of the project cycle |
| Focus on efficient conversion of inputs | Focus is on realisation or project objectives rather than outputs |
| Emphasis on administration rather than management | Emphasis is on management rather than on administration |

Bell and Morse (2000: 108)

established during the start-up phase. Adequate communication and reporting also needs to be ensured.

While the foundations for sustainability are laid in the establishment and early development phase of a partnership, its continuation depends on it meeting certain conditions, which are discussed below.

Maintenance and continuation

Adaptability

A partnership will not survive if it is cast in stone. Partnerships that continue over time adapt in line with the changing environment in which they operate and meet the changing needs and situations of their partners. They also sometimes shed partners or take on new ones. Partners need to redirect the goals of their partnership if they find that they are not achieving its purpose or have moved beyond this.

Institutionalise partnerships

Institutionalisation involves moving a partnership beyond the people involved and locating it in an organisation's structure. It also involves ensuring that it is part of organisational strategy, is known about, and has buy-in at all levels in the organisation but especially at senior management level. Furthermore the partnership is enabled to survive the loss of key people through having backup built in.

Ensure a reliable source of funding

Long-term partnerships are generally sustained through a combination of partner contributions and income generation from services rendered or fund raising. FET colleges thus need to be able to finance their contribution to a partnership's activities. As such, for colleges to successfully engage in entrepreneur development, this part of their mandate needs to be supported by their funding norms and standards.

Resolve problems that arise

Conflict and problems should be viewed as inevitable in partnerships and not necessarily a sign of failure. Nevertheless, it is essential that problems in both the partnership's

relationships and activities are identified as early as possible and addressed as if they are not, they could threaten its success and survival.

Ensure a continued demand for partnership function

A partnership's sustainability depends on continuing demand for the services it provides. Partnerships thus need to ensure that the services they are providing remain relevant, and maintain the goodwill and support of their beneficiaries.

Build strong relationships

Partnerships tend to ebb and flow and one relationship often develops into another. What is core to partnership continuation, however, is the quality of the relationships that develop between partner organisations. If they build strong healthy relationships, organisations will be able to move on to form new partnerships on the basis of pre-existing relationships.

The above lessons are presented bearing in mind the many challenges which FET colleges face sustaining partnerships, which are noted in the following section.

6.5 Key partnership sustainability challenges faced by FET colleges

FET colleges face numerous challenges developing sustainable partnerships, especially ones with an entrepreneur development focus. Key challenges identified by this study include: insufficient human and financial resources for effective partnership engagement; a lack of dedicated focus on partnerships; limited institutionalisation of partnerships and a heavy reliance on individuals; poor partnership skills; inflexible systems that tend not to support partnership operation, particularly those focused on enterprise development; and a weak partnership and learning-organisation orientation.

Even though these challenges exist in the FET college sector, through taking a more informed and conscious approach to the relationships they engage in, colleges can begin to lay the foundations for sustainable partnerships to develop. Part of the process of consciously building sustainable partnerships is assessing a partnership's sustainability. The next section provides some guidelines on how to do this.

6.6 Assessing partnership sustainability

To assess the sustainability of a partnership some idea or vision needs to be developed of what it will look like as a sustainable entity and then to occasionally assess progress made toward this. While the process of assessing sustainability is not an absolute science and is subject to different interpretations, sustainability indicators can be used to gauge progress toward this. It is important however that all partners agree on the indicators to be used and acknowledge that they may have different perspectives on these when analysing their partnership. Furthermore, in the process of trying to achieve sustainability, their notion of what it is that they are striving for may change and this might require an adaptation of the indicators they are using to measure it.

Drawing on Bell and Morse (2000), the vision of what a sustainable partnership might look like could be captured by a set of factors translated into indicators that would increase or decline as the partnership moves toward sustainability. The sustainability of the partnership could be measured against these over time. With this in mind, the factors which this thesis found to be significant in partnership sustainability could form the basis of sustainability indicators for FET college partnerships. These could be adapted by colleges and their partners to suit the specifics of each partnership and used to assess the progress of these toward sustainability. Using a rating scale, like the one below, each factor could be rated at specified intervals⁴³. This would enable partners not only to get a sense of whether their partnership is making progress toward sustainability but also of areas of strength and weakness.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A weak factor. Mostly not present or very limited. | An emerging factor. It is present but not yet stable or consistent | A strong factor. A distinguishing feature. |
| 1-3 | 4-6 | 7-10 |

Useful questions to ask that can help build an understanding of sustainability in relation to partnerships include:

- What is its scope or scale of the partnership effort to be sustained, i.e. what is within and outside of its boundary?

⁴³ The idea for this rating process and the rating scale comes from Gamble 2005b: 7.

- At what level or quality are the partnership and its activities to be sustained?
- What is the time-scale over which sustainability is to be achieved?
- What are the benefits and consequences of sustainability and are the benefits worth the costs?

6.7 Conclusion

This thesis has shown that partnerships are complex and multilayered and that various factors affect their successful development and sustainability. The literature and findings also indicate that partnerships with a community development orientation, like FET college entrepreneur development partnerships, are likely to face greater financial sustainability challenges than other types of partnerships. This is because of the incapacity of their target beneficiaries to cover the cost of services provided and insufficient state funding which makes them dependent on fundraising.

While partnerships are considered to be the most challenging relationship-type, if they are sustained over time they have the potential to generate ongoing benefits and are thus worth striving for. From an efficiency point of view it is thus better for an institution to invest in developing sustainable partnerships than to be constantly starting new partnerships.

Partnership sustainability should however not be viewed as something that is finite as partnerships and their environments are not constant. The people and organisations that carry out partnerships and the environments in which they operate are likely to change and this will affect their partnerships and the sustainability of these. Partnership sustainability is thus a goal that needs to be continuously striven for. However, if the foundations for sustainable partnerships are laid and these are built on in a way that enables learning and change, these have the potential to survive over time and to generate benefits beyond their original architects and purposes.

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College group interview, engineering Campus, 8 December 2004

College Marketing Manager (previously Production Manager at case study Campus), 7 September 2005

College Trainer, case study Campus, 12 August 2005

Municipality Economic Development Manager, 23 August 2005

NGO Provincial Coordinator, 9 December 2004

NGO Provincial Coordinator and the Enterprise Development Unit Coordinator, 16 August 2005

NGO Trainer, case study Campus, 16 August 2005

Representative from an organisation involved in another partnership at the case study Campus, 23 August 2005

Appendix

Appendix 1: The Research Process

One of the features of this thesis is that it employed a flexible design which allowed for adaptation as the study progressed⁴⁵. Qualitative research is an iterative process that extends from the design stage through to the writing of the final report. This means that once the research starts progressing and insight and clarity is gained through the processes of reviewing literature on the topic, data collection, and data analysis, changes can be made to the research questions and design. Both Maxwell (1993: 49) and Stake (1995: 20) recommend that researchers start out with a set of guiding questions that are then refined during the research process. In the case of this thesis, the research question, focus and scope of the project were refined as the study progressed.

An initial design was developed and included in the research proposal submitted for thesis. It was initially intended that three partnerships would be studied, one focused on industry training, one concerned with the link between higher education and FET, and one which addressed the development of entrepreneurs. The initial design was based on the assumption that there would be sustainable college partnerships in each of these three sectors that could be studied and is reflected in the initial research question, which was:

What are the defining characteristics of sustainable South African FET partnerships and what factors, conditions, strategies, processes, activities and elements determine or explain their sustainability?

However after initial entry into the field, two problems with the early design and scope of the thesis became apparent. Firstly, it became clear that very few of the so call 'partnerships' in the College met the definition of a genuine partnership and even fewer could be characterised as 'sustainable partnerships'. As such they might not be able to yield much insight on the issue of partnership sustainability. This posed a research validity problem as, if the research question was retained it would result researching something that

⁴⁵ See Chapter 4 which outlines the research strategy used.

was not there. Secondly, a design that included three partnership case studies across three sectors was too large for the scope of a mini-thesis.

At this stage the focus and scope of the thesis were refined and a more detailed design was developed. It was decided that the thesis would focus on two partnerships in one sector – entrepreneur development partnerships targeting communities. The preliminary research (initial interviews and document review) showed that two relationships that could be defined as partnerships could be found in this sector and that both could yield useful insights about the issue of partnership sustainability. Interviews and further document review then focused on these two partnerships.

After all the interviews had been transcribed and analysis had begun, a further revision was made to the design. It was decided that two cases still exceeded the scope of the thesis as each case would require its own in-depth description and analysis which would then need to be followed by a cross case analysis. The T-EP Partnership was then selected as the single case for the thesis. The rationale for its selection are included in Chapter 4.

The research and write up of this thesis was carried out in five broad phases. Each phase and the activities therein are noted below.

Phase 1: Initial design of research and site selection

- Initial selection and review of literature on the topic and research methodology (facilitated initial engagement with key issues and helped to inform the research questions and design)
- Formulation of initial research questions and design
- Writing dissertation proposal
- Discussions with dissertation supervisor and with a number of experts on FET colleges and partnerships more generally
- Selection of research site and potential cases and permission gained from the college to do the research (one informal and one formal meeting with the college held)

Phase 2: Initial field research, testing of and focusing design and questions

- Further reviewing and summarising of literature on the topic and research methodology (facilitated fine-tuning of the research focus, selection of key readings, identification of potential theoretical frameworks to inform design and analysis, and development of interview guide)
- Formulation of initial interview guide
- Conducting initial interviews
- Collecting relevant documentation
- Preliminary reviewing and analysis of interview data and documents
- Revision of case sample, research questions and interview questions

Phase 3: Main fieldwork

- Carried out interviews and kept field notes on observations and initial interpretations
- Transcribed interviews

Phase 4: Data analysis, final literature review, and finalisation of research focus, scope and design

- Analysing data
- Final selection and review of key literature to provide theoretical underpinnings for analysis. In terms of research literature, reading focused particularly on case study designs and research
- Revision of design – sample reduced to one partnership and design shifted from a multiple to single case study

Phase 5: Writing up thesis

During this phase the write up of each chapter occurred. This involved occasionally going back to phase 4.

Appendix 2: The Interview Guide

| ORGANISATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS | |
|---|--|
| 1. Understanding of partnership, partnership sustainability and partnership benefits | |
| Understanding of 'partnership' and 'sustainable partnership' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you define 'partnership'? Is your understanding of this shared by others in the college/your organisation? • What kinds of relationships/partnerships exist in the college/your organisation? • How do you understand the notion of 'sustainability' in relation to partnerships? • Is partnership sustainability a concern for the college/your organisation and why? |
| Partnership benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivates the college and its partners to engage in partnerships? • What benefits do these bring? |
| 2. College ethos, strategy and approach in relation to partnerships | |
| Ethos, strategy and approach in relation to partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College strategy with regard to partnerships and priority given to these • College-level partnership structures and processes • How are partnerships established and managed by the college? • Who in the college gets involved in partnerships? |
| CASE STUDY PARTNERSHIP-LEVEL QUESTIONS | |
| 3. Overview of case study partnership | |
| Purpose and nature of partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose (and goals) of the partnership? • Brief description of partnership activities • What kind of agreement governs the partnership? Has the partnership always had this kind of agreement? |
| Partners and their roles and contributions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main and secondary partners (name and brief description of each) • How long has each partner been involved? • Who initiated the partnership? • How were partners identified and selected? • What is the role of each partner? • What commitment has each partner made re time, human resources, funding, equipment and infrastructure? • Which, if any, of the partners is the lead partner? |
| Motivation for and initiation of the partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the impetus for the partnership? • What motivated you to join it? What were/are your expectations? • What motivated the other partners to become involved? |
| Length of partnership and current status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the partnership established and how long has it been in existence? • Was the partnership developed with the intension of being short-term or long-term? Has the intension in this regard changed over time? • What is its current status? |

| 4. Development and operation of case study partnership | |
|--|--|
| Development and evolution of the partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the life story of the partnership? What stages has it gone through? Have different activities been implemented at different stages? • Has the initial purpose of the partnership changed over time? • Were different partners brought in at different stages in its development? • Has partner motivation for involvement changed over time? • Have partner roles and contributions changed over time? |
| Implementation and management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who participates in the partnership? Who leads and manages it? Who carries out its activities? • Structures and processes established to manage the partnership and its work • Means and regularity of communication • Do partnership meetings occur and, if yes, how often? • How effectively has each partner carried out their roles and responsibilities? |
| Relationship and operational dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have different partners related to each other? To what extent are relationships governed by openness, trust, honesty, respect and reciprocity? Have any cultural or interpersonal aspects been significant? • How equitable is the contribution of each partner to the work and success of the partnership? Is it in line with the original agreement? • How have issues of power and equality played out? • What key tensions or conflicts have arisen? • How were/are problems dealt with (formally and informally)? |
| Critical incidents in the life of partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any events or incidents that lead to major changes in the partnership or enhanced or threatened its survival or continuation? |
| Reflection, learning and change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is/was there a culture of reflection and learning in the partnership? • Has the partnership or its activities been reviewed and evaluated? If yes, how and when? • Has the design and implementation of the partnership been flexible enough to accommodate lessons learnt and changing circumstances or needs? • What, if any, changes and improvements have been made on the basis of lessons learnt? |
| 5. Partnership achievements and lessons | |
| Achievements, failures and benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have been the main achievements of the partnership? • If any, what have its main failures been? • Benefits expected and attained by each partner • Have the benefits been mutual? |
| Strengths, weaknesses and challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have been the main strengths of the partnership? • What have been the main weaknesses? • What have been the main challenges and threats that it has faced? |
| Enabling and inhibiting factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors (environmental, institutional, people, partnership) enabled and inhibited the partnership's success and sustainability? |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were these different at different stages in the life of the partnership? • What would make the partnership sustainable in the long-term? |
| Key lessons about partnership success and sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What key lessons can be learnt from this partnership about developing successful, sustainable partnerships? • Knowing what you now know, what would you do differently next time around? • How different is this partnership to other college partnerships? Which lessons are/are not applicable to other types of partnerships? |

University of Cape Town

Appendix 3: Data Analysis Process Followed

The analysis process broadly followed the five step process Terre Blanche et al (2006: 322-325) suggest for analysing and interpreting qualitative data. Step 1 involves familiarisation and emersion in the data through reading, note taking and mapping. During Step 2, 'theme induction', the data is examined to determine its underlying principles which could become the themes or categories used in its analysis. The researcher brings to Step 2 a fairly good knowledge of the kinds of issues that are emerging and the kinds of interpretation that could be supported by the data.

Step 3 focuses on 'coding' the data which is a process of matching sections of the data to relevant themes. The process of theme induction and coding tend to merge as the one informs the other, and each leads to a refinement of the other as the understanding of the case increases. Step 4, is called 'elaboration' and involves further examination of the themes and data organisation. The goal is to ensure that all significant findings are adequately accounted for and that the finer nuances have been captured. This process can lead to a further refinement of themes and coding.

The coding and elaboration process for this thesis was carried out manually and on computer. Firstly, transcribed interviews were printed and coloured highlighters were used to identify themes and categorise pieces of text by theme on the printed copies. The cut and the paste function on MS Word was then used to physically group similarly coded pieces of data under different themes. The coded document (in printed and electronic form) was then subjected to scrutiny during the elaboration process and various revisions were made until the researcher was satisfied with the themes and organisation of the data.

Step 5 involves interpretation, verifying and writing up the findings and conclusions. During this step, the researcher carefully checked her interpretations for weaknesses and ensured that these could be backed up by evidence. In some cases she went back to and re-read original interview transcripts.